

REFLECTION

BY

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**TO
SANKAR**

It is neither an autobiography nor it is a story. The characters in it are fictitious; but still the representation is from facts. There is an unfettered expression of ideas based on truth.

In sum and substance it is just a

REFLECTION.

Jaipur, }
23-11-37 }

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CHAPTER 1.

There is a solitary youth sitting in the council chamber of an old historic and deserted castle. At one time it was the seat of a government but now the headquarters have been shifted to a modern and better place. Therefore it has become a regular haunt of European and American tourists. The only time when the place is altogether deserted is the summer, because during this part of the year Central India is infernally hot and there are no tourists. This young boy, being a native of the place, has gone there early in the morning and finding the place all to himself has occupied an old chair in the far corner of the hall. If any one were to look at him, he would find him in a pitiable condition with long drawn face, down-cast eyes, and engrossed in deep thought. If misery, degradation and self-reproach could be personified, he would be the best picture,

whether represented separately or taken together.

The reason is that he is trying to reflect. The reflection is not far back but over the events of the last seven years. He finds it hard to them in their true perspective, not to speak of it being merely hard but practically impossible; he remembers them in their chronological order; but that is all. The time has changed; circumstances have altered, his way of thinking is altogether different, and things have taken a turn: if it was a diary then the picture would have been different, though still a true one. Every thing would have been written as it was. There wouldn't have been any alterations or additions; no comments or criticisms. Still he is trying to ponder over the subject in as real a way as possible. This is the reason that he is unaware of the presence of an elderly Brahmin who has been watching him keenly for a very long time.

This old gentleman is about seventy years of age. His long white beard and moustache have almost covered his face; but if one were to have a look at him at close quarters, one would find that he possessed well chiselled features; which, according to the general trend of thought, may be termed as the model Aryan features. His broad and furrowed forehead

shows that he is intelligent and a man of experience. His deep set grey eyes look in such a fashion, that it is impossible for any thing to pass unobserved. As for as outward appearances are concerned he has proved a failure; but hardly he is happy. He has nothing to give except sympathy and sound advice.

In the end he decided to disturb this soul lost in deep thought. "You seem to be disappointed with life; but that should not be the case. It is a question of comparative satisfaction. There are millions of souls who would thank the Almighty for having what you possess."

"Please go away. Leave me in peace; you don't know what I was thinking about and what was going on in my mind. Elderly people like you are fond of giving advice without knowing the individual concerned. Every one is not the same."

"My attention was drawn towards you because you are somewhat unusual. If you were of the ordinary type I might have drawn my own conclusions and would have gone long ago leaving you undisturbed. But there was something exceptional which aroused my curiosity; and that is the reason I have been watching the changing expressions upon your face during the last twenty minutee."

"There must be something very curious

about me otherwise every one wouldn't have put the same question. Wherever I go there is that searching stare in the people's eyes which some times frightens me. That is the reason I try to avoid them. The only thing which gives me some peace of mind is my own thoughts. Thinking this to be the most secluded spot, I came here; but to my misfortune you have appeared on the scene. "

" I can quite imagine the amount of your annoyance of which I am the cause. It will be difficult, nay impossible, for you to settle your mind back on the subject. The way in which you were thinking, I could make out that it was not new; but something which you are in the habit of thinking so often that it has become a routine work. "

" Perhaps you are right, but this kind of talk would lead us nowhere; therefore please leave me alone. "

" The sun has risen very high, and it is a blazing inferno outside. You have spent quite a good bit of time here; and it won't do you any harm if you return with me in my cab. "

The youth, whose name happens to be Ganesh, thought, " There is no harm taking this free lift. I shouldn't expect each and every one to get me out of the difficulty. At any rate, this old man

seems to be of good intentions, and has charming manners. Besides, as he says I would not be able to get home till late in the evening". Both of them descended the steps of the castle without a word passing between them. Neither of them could ascertain what was going on in the other's mind; but they were thinking about one another. It was not a continuous flow of ideas but some random thoughts which confuse the human brain. The wind outside was just like a flame and they had to cover their faces with their hands till they got into the carriage. Below the coachman gave them some cold water to drink and they took it without a word. After that both of them fell back on the cushions as though they were lifeless.

They were silent all the way long. When they were nearing the city, the elderly gentleman, said, " Please let me know the place where I should drop you. Besides, if you ever make up your mind to see me, come any time without hesitation. I live near the city palace and my name is Nath. "

Ganesh stared at the name. He thought, " Could it be possible that I am sitting by the side of a man whose family is not only influential in the state but well known in India. So this is the gentleman who has knocked about

the world, has read a good bit; but wouldn't let any one into his secret. No one knows, why he has remained unmarried all his life. The only thing he seems to do is to go to queer places and read in his spare time. People have seen him sitting in the houses of dancing girls and similar places. Some of them think that he is a debauch; but those who know him, wouldn't have anything spoken against him. Their respect for him is so much that it amounts to worship."

Nath noted all this but did not utter a single word. He knew very well what was going on in the youth's mind.

In the end Ganesh spoke, "I don't know what to say; but it would indeed be a great pleasure to see you again. I will surely come tomorrow morning and remain with you during the whole of the afternoon, if you are not doing anything in particular. I live round the corner and I thank you very much for bringing me home. Will you ask your man to stop the carriage; because I would like to get down here?"

Nath asked the man to stop the carriage; and the boy got down. After that he disappeared into a lane and gave the old gentleman some food for thought. Nath thought "This boy is very curious. He wants to hide his name as well as his place of residence. I

will try to get his story out of him to-morrow; if possible. His mind would be relieved to some extent. Perhaps I might be able to help him; and if led on the right path he would be of some service to the society. He is young in years, but in experience old."

Ganesh, on the other hand, ran straight into the house and threw himself on the bed. The poverty of the house, the past life and all other things came like a flash before his eyes and he began to cry like a baby. He thought "Is this going to be the end? Am I as worthless as this that no one would even listen to me; or is this a test of honesty? And it seems to me that under this pressure I will break. If I break, God help the society. It will add another fiend to its number, who will corrupt, degenerate and demoralise it to such an extent that it will sink to a very low level of civilisation. Why! because I have power and I can gather thousands of followers."

The next morning he went straight to the old man's house. As a matter of fact it was not his house. It belonged to his brother who was an important official in the state. Few rooms in the back portion of the building were allotted to him. No member of the

family ever interfered in his private affairs. Some of the children were told that he was half-mad and it was better to avoid him. Thus he was left to himself. Sometimes he used to shut himself up for days together. The only times he got out was for meals or for some other important business. The reason was that he used to read all sorts of queer books.

Occasionally he used to be out of the house for days together and nobody knew where he went. But he was a profound scholar of history and human psychology and did not like to be interrupted in his research. His brother gave him a limited amount with which he used to manage very well. He wanted Ganesh particularly because he had taken a particular liking to the boy; and, besides, he was a very interesting subject for his study.

Ganesh thought, "I do not know why I am going to his house? People call him half-mad; no one ever sees him. When they see me going to his house they may think that I am also out of my mind. But why should I care about this funny world? If people can get something out of you, they will make you think that they are doing everything which is good for you. If you are poor and helpless, even your own

relatives will say, 'We are unable to do any thing for our sons and daughters. How do you expect us to do anything for you?' Their meaning of doing anything for their own is doing everything possible for them and nothing for others, if they can help. They are selfish to the core and it is useless to expect anything out of them unless they are forced to do so. This applies to the people in power and not to the poor." Here he does not mean that all those who are in power are of the same type. Some of them are very good and they are so good that they are a source of danger to others who are in power. They are an obstacle to that evil wheel of social structure. No use blaming these people; because even those who rise from the poorer sections of the society also try to do the same. They have suffered so much that they do not want their own to suffer one tenth of what they have undergone.

Then he thought of the man to whose house he was going. He said to himself. "I feel particularly drawn towards him. There is that something inside, which says he is good. Let the world say what it likes. Every one knows my story. The only difference is that to him I will interpret it in my own way. He may like it: if he does then his time will

not be wasted, because he himself had asked me to come. He knows perfectly well that I am going to tell him something about myself and I may even ask him to help me." Thus engrossed in thoughts he had gone a few steps further from the gate of the old man's house. When he looked up, he retraced his steps and entered the compound. As soon as he had entered he found that people were eyeing each other and some were actually pointing towards him. He was going to the part of the building in which Nath lived, because he knew it very well. Though he was a newcomer to the place, he had heard so much about this curious gentleman that he knew a good deal about his outward behaviour and the way in which he lived. He found Nath waiting for him at the door with a broad smile and those laughing eyes which said, "Come little soul, we are always going to be pretty good friends. Tell me your little story and I will try to help you if I can, because you are honest."

"So you have come. I am really glad that you have, because if you hadn't, I would have tried to catch you unawares at some other place."

"What made you think that I wouldn't come. Didn't you rely on my promise of

yesterday. ? "

"That is the only reason that you find me waiting at the door for you. I knew you would keep your promise. But at the same time I thought that if you had told your friends that you were coming to my place, they would have persuaded you to believe that it was dangerous to come to this half-mad old bogey's house."

"Perhaps you are right. But I have no friends here, because I am quite new to the place, though I was born here. Even if I had some, they wouldn't have interfered because they think me to be queer as well. Anyhow I am here and I have kept my promise."

"Please make yourself at home. No conventions; no formalities; do what you like, smashing the place. Do it by all means, and no one would utter a single word, because it is all mine."

"You talk in a queer way. But your whole expression shows that you are telling the truth, and that is the reason I like you very much."

"It is getting very hot. If you feel like taking off your coat, do it by all means. I am asking the servant to prepare some lunch for

both for us. I know you must have had yours already, but you must have some with me. "

Ganesh did not utter a single word. But there was an expression in his eyes that conveyed too much. There was no question of caste because both of them were cosmopolitans as regards such things. Besides, Nath happened to be a Brahmin, and Ganesh was a member of the trading class. He asked the servant to prepare some meals which indirectly meant that it was to be a regular feast. Both of them sat watching each other for quite a long time, and all was quiet. The way in which Ganesh ate indicated that he was really hungry and he relished the dishes very much. After that there was a general talk; nothing in particular.

In the end Nath spoke, "I know there is something on your mind. Get it off your chest. You can speak freely and as long as you like. You can rest assured that no one will know, if you don't want it to be known. It will be as good as if you were talking to that marble statue in the castle. I don't think I am of any use; but, if I can, I will help you. Besides, we shall be able to pass some of our dull time and I am sure it will relieve your mind a good bit. "

"Every one knows my tale. Perhaps you are also acquainted with its broad outline. You may not like it, but I am going to tell it. I don't care even if it bores you. "

" The way in which you speak shows that it is going to be interesting. Please begin without preliminaries. "

Ganesh began his story.

CHAPTER II

I lost my father when I was about twelve years of age. Though he was of conservative ideas as regards himself, he was very liberal as far as I was concerned. He took his bath every morning and spent hours together for his morning and evening prayers. He tried to follow the path of virtue as far as he thought prudent under the circumstance. He died very young, otherwise you might have found me in altogether a different position. I was left alone with my mother and little sister. We had a grocery shop in the suburbs of Benares. The shop was not very big and the burden of maintaining the whole family was left on my shoulders. I had my uncles and other relatives, but I tried to pull on independently if possible. The consequences of mixing back with the family, if one has remained out of it for quite a long time are too well-known to those who are acquainted with the

Hindu social life, especially of the upper class. I was in a fix. If I wanted to continue my education, it meant closing the shop. Then the only source of income would have come to an end.

I was worried so much by these thoughts that my hair had turned grey in a few days time and I was a bundle of bones. One evening when I was lying on my bed, my mother came and sat near the pillow. She stroked my hair for quite a long time, but I didn't open my eyes. In the end when I looked up, I found that she was quite changed. She was no more that beautiful and smiling young woman which she used to be. For her life was a happy dream, before my father's death.

Looking at her sent a shudder through my frame. The look in her eyes was not of reproach, pity or suffering; but something which I can't explain and which I have never been able to forget. The whole vision is before my eyes, as I am talking to you. Those eyes seemed to say, "Why are you fretting, my son? What would become of us if you came to any harm. God forbid; but if you die then this Hindu society will not be content by ruining us; but it will torture us; and make us suffer to such an extent that even the

angels in Heaven will shed tears on our miserable plight. Let me share your secret. I will help you with all my heart and soul. I will work my fingers to the bone, to make you both happy. I have lost my beloved and the only thing which has kept me alive in this world are you both, otherwise I would have gone long ago. Specially you are his exact picture and my own blood."

After a few minutes I said, "Oh, Ma. I am suffering. I don't want to close the shop, but at the same time. I want to go on with my studies, and I can't find any way out of the difficulty."

Her face brightened up and she gave an exclamation of relief, "Is that all? If that was the only thing which has kept you worrying, then you shouldn't worry any more. When you go to the school, I will look after the shop, although the sales will be reduced to a great extent. As regards the general management such as buying things from the villages, paying the bills and so on, you will have to do yourself in your spare time in the morning and evening and on holidays. Still I do not know how you are going to manage such a difficult task. You needn't be worried about the house. I will be able to look after it as well, with the help of your sister."

" I can't see how you will be able to do so many things together. Please don't say such things any more. "

" If you can do what I have told you then I will be able to manage everything else quite easily. "

" But you—a woman !!. "

" Yes a woman, and better than many men. There is that something of will and determination which makes me think that you will be able to do it. As regards myself I am sure that I will be able to manage it quite easily. You do not know me. You are just a little child. Let the world say what it likes. Trust me. I know, I am a young and beautiful widow. It will not only be disgraceful, but losing honour and respect in the community, if I get out of the purdah. Every finger will be raised towards us. Our own relatives will be loath to see us, and they will avoid us. Even they will not hesitate in saying, 'Look at this woman who has lost all shame. We would have looked after them, and would have married the children and educated them, but she thinks we are after her money. Let them go to hell. They will come to us in the end, when they have lost what they possess. '

I stared at her in wonder and amazement; because I had never heard her before speaking with such a force and in such a manner. Her whole frame was quivering. It seemed to me that, if it was in her power she would demolish the Hindu society and construct one according to her liking. She went on in that same strain without stopping—

"Every tomfool who would come to our shop, whether young or old, will be pointed out as my lover and friend. There will be a good number of devils who will be up to every kind of mischief. Some will become our supposed friends; but they will be fiends in disguise. It will not be difficult to detect them I will let you know the persons who are to be avoided. Then there are others. Though they themselves are not up to mischief, they don't like to see others happy. They will tell you that though you are a child, you must look after the house; and ask your mother to occupy the proper place in the house and not to behave in such a shameless fashion."

I couldn't bear it any more. I requested her to stop; but she wouldn't. On the contrary she was louder and I had to listen to her without any murmur.

"You will have to be brave my child, and weather the storm. You will have to forge

ahead heedlessly. If you look back or stop, then you will be brought back to the level from where you had started. You will again be a member of this miserable tribe. It was the dying wish of your father that your education is not to be stopped under any circumstances. You are to be given a free hand in what you do; not only this, but you are to be encouraged in every way. There are all sorts of people, and many whom are kind and good. When they will know that we are good, they will help us in every way possible; therefore cheer up. From tomorrow you will go to school regularly and everything will be all right."

Then she suddenly stopped. All that anger, pride and determination seemed to have disappeared. She was herself again. She embraced me with motherly love of which I was deprived only after three years' time. Tears began to flow from her eyes, and there was no stopping of them for quite a long time. I and my sister joined in mute sympathy. We also cried; but up till now I have not been able to make out why? Now, when I think about her I still wonder from where that strength, energy and the force of will with which she faced this world, had come. Not to say of managing everything so perfectly, I couldn't even dream that she

would do even one-tenth of what she said. She appeared such a frail, and delicate creature that I thought if she would lift anything heavy with those thin white hands, they might be dislocated from her shoulders. That round face with rosy cheeks, brown hair and brown eyes with long eyelashes and that well marked face appeared incapable of doing any kind of hard work. I thought she was one of those heavenly creatures who come to this world to enjoy it in a happy state of mind and to leave it also in that condition. Whether in behaviour or in innocence she was just like a child.

Only a few months before my father's death we were in Delhi at my grandfather's house. Some sweets were brought for all the children in the house. She did not get an equal share of it and she was angry. Not only this, she chased me and my cousin in the garden for about ten minutes. In the end she was able to snatch some of them from our pockets. We went crying to our grandmother and told her that she had taken our sweets. She was called, but nothing would induce her to part with those sweets unless an equal distribution was made, she, of course, being included.

In the end my grandmother said, "You are a spoilt child. You shouldn't quarrel with children.

Now you are no more a child but a grown up little woman. (pointing towards us) Those two are your son and daughter. If children are quarreling you should try to stop them, but on the contrary you join in their quarrel."

To all this she only showed her perfect set of teeth with a broad grin, kissed her and ran into the garden to play with us. Grandmother saw her disappearing, smiled, and then said, "My only wish is to see you always happy like this. I don't think you would survive any kind of suffering. But you never can tell, because she has been a funny child all along, and has never been put to test. I don't think she is as stupid as she appears to be."

When I reflect over such happenings I wonder how happy she was before my father's death and what a difference was brought about by the changed circumstances. She wanted implicit obedience from both of us. One evening after visiting the temple of Vishwanath, she got her hair shaved off. She used to put, on a white shirt, white underwear and a white saree. After sometime when people knew her real worth they realised what a woman she was. Some of our relatives showed a good bit of outward interest in our domestic affairs. We had some real good friends as well who helped us in every way.

There were two uncles of mine about whom my mother always used to wonder; because father always used to say that they were the only ones who would stand in need. They were not the frequent visitors to our house. Never interfered with us. But they were in constant touch with us and knew everything directly or indirectly. I found very little time to study after the school hours and this hindered my further progress. Sometimes I used to be absent from the school for a couple of days; because I had to go to the villages and purchase raw materials. After walking twenty to thirty miles I used to get tired; still I tried to study as much as I could; but that was very little. Any-how I was able to get through my Intermediate.

There were a good many marriage proposals from all sorts of people. Some came and said that though they had not much money to give as a dowry their daughter was beautiful, very well educated; could swim, ride and so on. She would make us all happy. There were others who said that they would give a handsome dowry and beautiful girl. Make us rich. They would set me up in big business.

They would say, "That ought to be the proper thing for a member of the trading community. You must get rich and pull others along with you. No matter how you get rich, but

the only aim in your life should be to get rich as quickly as possible. The methods applied are of no consequence. There is a dying mother and the son has come to pawn a few of his belongings; charge him an adominable rate of interest and give him one third price of the articles. If there be a pregnant woman, do the same. Make it a golden rule; but at the same time make them think that you are doing a great favour. If you hadn't come to their help, goodness only knows what would have happened to them. These poor people are always in need. They will come to you again. After some time the capital will come back to you and the interest will continue for ever.

" Thus pass the same teachings to your son and the wealth will go on accumulāting. There may be a day when kings, judges, priests and the like will borrow money from you and your prestige will increase. Show the world that you are pious, charitable and a large-hearted person. Go to the temple every morning and evening. Give money to those fat and uncouth priests and make them fatter still. Build temples at a place where there are already dozens, and all of them empty. Construct rest-houses on the way where there are no travellers. Dig wells where no one will drink water. Do all sorts of funny things. Open houses of charity where

free meals are given to thousands of beggars daily. This will create a class of stolid beggars who will be up to all sorts of mischief. They will increase vice, crime and degradation into the society and help you to push forward. Don't ask where all this would lead to? Whether you are happy or not doesn't matter. Getting rich quick is an end in itself.

"There is no happiness in the world. The only way in which people seem happier is to increase their material welfare. Amassing of wealth is an end in itself. It will give you power, honour, and glory. Titles can be bought with it, and it will push you forward into the upper strata of the society. We are giving you our daughter and doing all this; because today a University student is supposed to be the most desirable boy for any girl. It does not matter if he is a deditious, drunkard, and a downright scoundrel. Good number of examples have proved this, but still they follow this blindly. We can get plenty of boys better than you in other castes but we must get the girls married in our own community, and University boys are rare." They were very anxious to see me married; but they never talked about my sister's marriage because we were poor. They first wanted to see me sacrificed and after that my sister might be able to find a suitable husband.

Here you might ask, why was not my sister allowed to choose any boy whether inside the community or out of it. My sister was free to do what she liked; but she was brought up in altogether a different fashion. Her education was that of old Hindu tradition. There was no such thing as logic for her. To her the teachings of my father and mother were sacred. For her the husband is a god, There is no question of love.

If love develops afterwards, there is the good luck of the husband and the wife. It does not matter to a Hindu girl if the husband is blind, lame, leper, thief, drunkard or a scoundrel. She must take her lot and stick to him. If she tries to revolt, then there is no punishment known to human beings, which will not be inflicted upon her. Not only the community to which she belongs will punish her, but all other sections of Hindu society will look down upon her, and try to avoid her as an undesirable person. She will be hated and despised by all. The only ones who would look at her with a favourable eye are those criminals which exist in every human society, who think a girl to be an object of play which is to be enjoyed for few minutes. After having taken all she possesses, they kick her out into the streets as though she were a nonentity.

My mother refused all the marriage proposals, telling them to ask me, and if I consented then there was no need for her permission. She knew all these things, but never came in my way. I was given full freedom

CHAPTER III

When such was the state of affairs she fell suddenly ill. She had a high fever and she seemed to have lost all her strength and energy. My two uncles who were not frequent visitors to our house came at once when they knew about her illness. Now they were so much worried, that the only concern in their life seemed to see my mother recover from her illness, but she got worse daily. The doctors couldn't make out definitely what her illness was, and they had given up all hopes of her recovery. At that time we came to know who our real friends were. One of my uncles had closed the shop, stopped all business correspondence and left the family behind, when my aunt was about to give birth to a child. The other had taken an indefinite leave without pay from the Public Works Department, because he was not sure how long it would take. If worst came to the worst, he wanted to see our

affairs settled in the best possible manner. The first one who owned the shop was my father's younger brother and the other one was the elder brother of my mother.

It is difficult to describe the goodness and sincerity of their hearts. They were the only ones who appeared to be the best persons concerned about our affairs and had taken the full management of the house. There was no question of money because they had brought plenty with them.

Doctors came after every few hours and they told us nothing excepting our uncles. No nurses could have attended her as these two worthies. Not to speak of coming near her, they wouldn't allow anyone even to change the bed sheets. It was simply a sight to see them sitting on the either side of her bed watching her for twenty four hours. They had forgotten even to take their meals. A little smile from my mother and they seemed happy; any expression of pain and their faces would turn deathly pale. One was her elder brother and the other had remained from his childhood with my father. Perhaps both had understood her true worth and something of that real woman in her. There was that unbreakable bond of human sympathy which may be called divine love, which is felt and cannot be explained. It is selfless. It is

all give and no take.

She was very ill for nearly a week. Then suddenly on Saturday night at about twelve she opened her eyes and smiled. She tried to speak, but couldn't, because she was very weak. My uncles thought, that it was the turning point in her illness and she would recover. They touched her hands; they were quite cold and they knew that the end was near. I and my sister were called from the adjoining room. There were two or three others present at that time who had come to inquire after her health. When she knew that she couldn't speak then after looking at my uncles she looked at us. Tears began to flow from her eyes. The same was the case with my uncles. We watched all this, but didn't know what was happening. My uncles nodded and their eyes seemed to say. "Don't worry dear sister. We would do all that is in our power and we know their dying father's wish."

Suddenly her tears stopped and she smiled again, but that was her last smile. She died smiling. As far as she was concerned that was a happy ending; because she had suffered very little. During the last few years she had worked so hard that she had forgotten all her suffering. When people saw us staring hard, we were removed instantaneously from the room.

All these days I was in a kind of trance. I did everything like a machine and did not know what I was doing. After her death my mind was a perfect blank, if such a thing is possible. The faces of my uncles became quite stern. There was no shedding of tears. They ordered the necessary things and made arrangements for her cremation. Our friends and relatives began pouring into the house. Men sobbed and pretended to cry, tried to show that they were deeply affected. Women on the other hand shouted at the top of their voice some stereotyped sentences, not only in the house but from the other end of the street, so that our neighbours looked curiously out of their windows to know who were coming. All these pretensions were so hideous, unnatural, unreal, and unbecoming that they were simply revolting to all the human senses. They asked me to cry, telling me that it was my duty to do so; because my mother was dead; but I couldn't do so. Some wondered, and other did not hesitate in saying, that the mother and the son were not on good terms, and that he was not at all sorry for her death.

Poor deluded creatures; what did they know about our love? How could they measure the depth of my sorrow. All that I have learned is due to her. I am hers and that is all. I couldn't cry before all these people. I would

shut myself into the room and cry there to my heart's content.

That was the state of affairs not for a few days but for quite a long time. I asked some of them—

"Why do you make all these noises? Why do you pretend as though some great calamity has come over all of you? You are the last persons who will be intersted in our affairs."

They would say, "Look at the impudence of the boy. He asks such foolish questions as though he doesn't understand anything. We are the only ones who feel the loss of any good member of the community. The only bad thing she did was to spoil you; otherwise she was a firm upholder of our traditions and took a real interest in them. We are the chiefs and guides of the community and if you dare to utter such idiotic things any further it would be disastrous for you. We are not paying any attention to what you say, because your uncles are really the responsible persons. Otherwise we would have showed you the results of insulting the elders. We would not only have stopped the death ceremony, but might have excommunicated you. You know the consequences. It wouldn't only be bad for you, but think of your little sister and the condition of your relatives."

Such are generally the utterances of these wise people. All that they want are grand feasts. Feed the Brahmins and feed them. Give, till you possess, in charity. If you don't possess any thing, then borrow some thing. If people were not prepared to lend you anything, and if you have nothing to pawn, then sell yourself and your own to the community. It can easily be done. Marry your own daughter or sister to an old and hideous creature; torture her all her life, to perform these so called religious ceremonies. If you don't do it, then out you go and the punishment is horrid.

Besides there is the danger of making the soul of your dear departed suffer in that everlasting hell fire; because such are the Brahmanical teachings. If there be a soul and if it does exist after death, then who knows what happens to it. No one has been able to find it out, and no one will ever be able to. Hindus do it; because they haven't got the guts and the courage to stop all these evils. Some of them really believe in them, because they have lost all their thinking power and follow the path blindly.

My mother used to say, "I don't believe in all this bunk, because all these ceremonies have taken fantastic shapes. They have lost their original utility, and are the causes of degenerating and demoralising the Hindu society.

Due to these it is sinking to the low level of civilisation. When our forefathers laid down that it was essential for us to visit the holy places, there was a principle behind. Travelling is an education in itself. By seeing all the four corners of this huge subcontinent you gain a vast amount of experience. You get to know the people, and understand their manners, customs, and their way of living. A kind of understanding is created and that bond of sympathy and fellow-feeling becomes much stronger. "

I suppose she realised these injustices too distinctly. She used to lose her self-control, when she uttered these sentences. It was simply a sight to watch her glowing red hot face at that time. Without stopping she used to continue in the same strain.

Now it has become a positive crime to visit these holy places. They have become the chief centres of debauchery and crime. The Dev Dasis, which was a respected order of nuns, who used to help the pilgrims, have become low immoral women, first for these fat priests, and then for the supposed pilgrims who come for such purposes only. Where-ever you go, the priests want to fleece you like any thing. They will make you swear by religion, and will then, leaving you the mere return fare,

appropriate the whole of your money forcibly as charity, telling you that it is good for those who have already departed and good for your future. The more they can take from you, the better will be the place assured in Heaven for you and yours. It is of no consequence if you had promised your children some presents, because what are the worldly things before the joys of Heaven? If you want some emergency money they will gladly lend it to you, because they are sure that they will be able to get many times the original amount. No one can dare even to delay returning the loan of these senders to Heaven and contractors of religion. Your whole conscience might revolt against it, but you have to care for the sentiments of others. You might commit any crime known to humanity and if you pay them well, every thing will be forgiven and you are better than any fellow in existence.

“ This does not mean that there is no good in them. Remove these gross evils and every thing will work well. For any kind of constructive work cooperation and help is necessary. Cut these evils at their very root. With the exceptions of a few, Brahmins as a whole are good servants of the society. They serve you well and truly. The only thing necessary is to give a lesson to these mischief-mongers of the

community. The Hindu teachings and philosophy are unrivalled in the world. If taught properly they are the best form of religion and are the finest means of training the mind and building up character. "

When the elders of my community knew that there was no chance of a big feast, they disappeared one by one. There was no more sympathy, but some indications of troubles ahead. They thought that they won't take any part in the ceremonies and it would not be possible for me and my sister to get married in that city. They thought that I had a house and property there and I would have to stick to them, but they were all wrong.

After performing the necessary after-death ceremonies, we were taken to Delhi. The shop at Benares was closed and the house was given on rent. At Delhi the events moved with a great speed. My sister was engaged to a young boy at Agra. I didn't like the idea, but I was never consulted. I was told about the engagement and that the marriage would take place just after ten months.

I was openly against the marriage, because I was told that my future brother-in-law was poor, ugly and uneducated. I didn't mind poverty because we ourselves were poor, but my whole conscience revolted against his being

ugly and uneducated. I was powerless. Not only the other relatives, but the two uncles of mine had given their consent and I was at my wits' end. My sister was of opinion that once she was engaged to this boy, he was the only one who was going to be her husband at all.

Thoughts that were crazy ran across my mind. Suppose I went to the boy and told him that by marrying my sister he would be practically killing a beautiful and innocent girl and that if he had any decency and honour left in him, he shouldn't do such a thing. It might have had the desired effect, but something told me that I should not commit such a folly. If the boy refused then it would be worse for every one. In any case I decided to verify all these statements personally. One evening I went to Agra telling my people that I was going with a few friends for a picnic. After posting myself into shop just opposite the house of my future brother-in-law, I made the necessary inquiries indirectly and found that the version was not altogether wrong. As luck would have it, only after a few minutes I found the boy coming out of the house. Though he was not a handsome youth, he was not positively ugly. Just a look at him: and something told me that, after all, things were not so bad as they had been painted. The following afternoon quietly I

returned to Delhi.

My first conversation with him was at the time of his marriage. Though not educated at school, he was a polite, well-behaved and well-mannered youth. That firm chin and slightly raised head showed that he possessed character and that he was a man of principles. As I knew more and more of him I found that instead of disliking I became fond of him. Behind that ugliness there was some attraction by which no one could say that he disliked him. He tried to please all, therefore he had no enemies; but at the same time he had no ambitions. He was one of those happy-go-lucky youths who take life as it comes before them, and never bother about anything any more.

There are two other members in his family—his old father, and an elder sister who had been a widow since she was a child of ten. If there be women of character who have sacrificed everything for the sake of others I think she was one of them. The only concern in her life had been to look after her old father and bring up her little brother. My brother-in-law had lost his mother at an early age, but I don't think he had felt her loss so bitterly. She had a kind word for every one and tried to help others as much as possible.

If she had a lover, no one had ever

known anything about him. I don't think the world will ever know this secret of hers. Because according to the Indian standard now she was an old woman of forty and due to the present condition of her ill health, I think her days were numbered.

Still she was just the same old ball of fire, and ordered what ought to be done and what should not be done. She ruled like an autocrat but justly. Everything she did was for the sake of others and not for hers. Everything went on so well; because the considerations of self did not arise. No one could dare to approach her when she was angry; because at that time she was next to the Devil himself. If it was in her power at that time, she would smash the world to pieces and never gloat over her vengeance. She would smack her younger brother, who was a young man of twenty-eight as though he were a child of three and he would receive the punishment in a similar fashion.

His father seemed to be a man belonging to another world. Got up early in the morning. After having his bath went to the temple which was at a distance of two miles. Returned at about eleven and had his meals. Took a little nap and visited some of his friends in the evening. Talked about all sorts of things. After having his evening meals, read a little and then went

to bed. That was his daily routine which was broken when his son wanted to take a holiday and he had to look after the shop. This old man of sixty-eight was quite strong and did not remember to have had any kind of serious illness.

When my sister entered this little family she took some time to adapt herself to these new surroundings. The way in which she was brought up helped her to do so. She obeyed every one and tried to please all. There was no question of love because she was tied to the man for life. Either she must leave the society or stick to him. It seems that love had developed and both of them are now perfectly happy. They have three sons, the eldest being six.

The only thing which troubles my sister's mind is me. She is so much worried about me that she cries her eyes out after me. She does not like my nomadic life. She wants to see me settled. When people ask her about me, the only thing which she can say at the present moment is that she has a brother but nothing further, because she did not know my whereabouts. Sometimes I do write her a line or two, but that is once in a blue moon. She loves me so much that she would give anything even to have some news about my welfare. She does not want to interfere with my freedom,

but she wants to see me happy and her idea of happiness is a settled life.

CHAPTER IV

After my sister's marriage their next thought was to get me married as early as possible. My two uncles about whom I have already spoken were not at all keen to see me tied up unless I particularly wanted to. If I wanted to be free, they wanted to help me in my freedom in every possible way. But things were not going to be as easy as I imagined them to be. Due to the previous happenings which I have already stated I couldn't get through my terminal examinations, with the result that I had to postpone taking my degree examination from Delhi University for two years.

Besides the ladies in the house, the one person who was very anxious to see me married was another uncle of mine, because he was the eldest member in our family after my father's death. He lived in the little

village of Sitapur, some twenty miles from Meerut. So long as my father was alive he helped the other members of the family—specially in marriage and the death ceremonies. After his death he was the fit and proper person to act in that capacity. The first object on whom he decided to bestow that benevolent act was me. As far as he was concerned there was no question of dowry. If a beautiful and educated girl and a dowry was to be arranged then it would have been the work of others and not his. He was uneducated and his ideas about society were very crude. He lived solely by farming and most of his friends were also of the same type.

He decided that I should marry the daughter of a friend of his. The whole thing was arranged in a most ingenious and cunning fashion. His friend was reluctant to become an accomplice to such a conspiracy. But he said, "Don't I know the risk. I am asking you to do this because you are my friend and I want to preserve my honour and respect in family. The boys of today are trying to be turbulent, but they should not be allowed to do so."

"If our scheme fails then we shall be the laughing stock of the world. Everything might turn out as you have arranged, but I am sure the boy

will refuse and there we are helpless."

"Wait and see my friend. I know how to act and when to act. I know you would do anything for the sake of our friendship but think of your advantages as well. You couldn't dream of marrying your daughter to such a boy even if you were to bring the heaven and the earth together. You have not only to think for the future happiness of your daughter but for our uplift in the community. By this marriage we will know many of those so-called educated people in our community and our connections will be better. The world is changing and we must soar high by hook or by crook."

"I know you are exposing yourself to danger on my account. You are doing all this because we have been friends from our early childhood."

"Tut, Tut! Don't talk of these sentiments; and now to action."

This eldest uncle of mine had decided to perform the engagement ceremony in such a fashion that no one even got a chance of raising an objection. He wrote to all my relatives that the engagement of his nephew would take place in a couple of days and that all of them were cordially invited. The whole thing was performed in all pomp and glory and I was told about it afterwards. I thought that to

marry was in my hands and that engagements could be broken. But later on I found out the mistake which has affected my whole life,

Later on he wrote to these two uncles of mine that he was surprised at their in-activity. They used to talk so much about the dowry and educated girls but had done nothing till then. He thought they would do something, since I was getting spoiled and had remained unmarried at that advanced age of sixteen. In the end he had decided to act and thought he had acted wisely. He knew that the responsibility was all his and he would bear all the expenses.

He was the eldest and no one dare oppose him, otherwise he would be branded down by the whole community as an undesirable fellow. Besides the arguments of my uncle were irrefutable and a good bit of publicity was given to the whole matter.

My uncle at Delhi was publicly against it, but he was helpless. The date for marriage was fixed just two months after the engagement. If the marriage didn't take place on the fixed date, then according to the Pundits the horoscope wouldn't tally for another seven years. It was impossible for any one to wait for seven years. Therefore the marriage must be performed at once. Hundreds of guests and

relatives were invited to Sitapur and a huge pandal was erected. The whole village seemed in a kind of stir and people were eyeing each other with meaningful eyes. A long and courteous letter was written to Delhi inviting all the members of the family and requesting them to bring the bridegroom along with them. The uncle at Delhi was simply stunned by the news and he didn't know what to do. He simply gave me the letter and I threw it aside in disgust.

After a few days there was a telegram which contained that if my uncle was unable to come he should send me at once by the first available train to Sitapur. The telegram was handed over to me, but I didn't go till the following morning.

The girl's father was very much perturbed when he knew that I hadn't arrived even after sending the telegram. He went to my uncle and said, "If he doesn't arrive what shall we do. If the thing fails then we will be the laughing stock of the whole community and I will never be able to get the girl married."

"Don't be afraid. The responsibility is all mine. When I do certain things I never leave loopholes as far as possible. If he doesn't come, there is another newphew of mine who is

present here, although uneducated and the son of a farmer. He will be too glad to get us out of the difficulty. He has come here to witness the marriage. There is a certain limit to resistance but beyond that they can't. The boy might be under some influence but those under whose influence he is acting are unable to stop him. Once a quarrel, and there can be no greater enemy than your own relative."

The girl's father gave him a hearty embrace and was about to go when my uncle shouted from behind. "I am sending another telegram. If the boy doesn't arrive, everything will go on as I have told you."

This time the telegram was addressed to uncle with a warning to suffer the consequences in case I was not sent at once. I was called into my uncle's room and he showed me the telegram, this time not with that usual indifference but with tears in his eyes.

He said, "I was the one who used to advise you not to marry unless you particularly wanted to marry the girl you loved. Now I am the first person requesting you to sacrifice yourself. I have no right over you and you are absolutely free to do what you like, but I am powerless and I haven't got the strength and energy to fight the society. I never

knew that the things would reach to such a climax. I have two daughters. They have been brought up in the old traditional way. If you don't go they will never be married. I am getting old and feeble daily. Now it is not a question of one or two persons, but of a group of families. If I had a son, I don't think I would have loved him better. Times are changing swiftly. Perhaps you might be able to remove these evils."

I decided to go and told him that I was going by the next available train. My brain was clouded with all sorts of thoughts. I decided to end it all by jumping into the Ganges. I thought, "Why should I spoil the life of a girl who does not know anything about these things, and her whole life will be made miserable by me. She would curse me and the society all her life." Then again I thought "If she marries another boy who is not in love with her, she will be miserable just the same. Besides what are one or two more sacrifices where thousands are sacrificed daily? I am an instrument of the circumstances. In order to save one, I will be sacrificing many. Who is she to me! But the others are my own flesh and blood and killing myself will be a coward's way out. I must live and fight." The next morning

I was at Sitapur. Every one was really glad to see me. My uncle was extremely happy. No time was lost and all the customs and ceremonies began at once. Uncle told every one that the reason of late arrival was a slight illness. I did really look ill and every one believed his story.

He said that after my father's death, he was the one who ought to see me settled in life. Such rare occasions did not come often in life, and he was going to spend with an open hand. No one would remain unsatisfied. The money which I possessed would be used for my further education.

I decided to play my part satisfactorily and I played it well. I didn't say a word to any one and bowed with that indifferent politeness, which is characteristic of the upper Hindu classes. It seemed to me as though I was moving in a dream. I was unconscious of what was happening around me. I was just like one who is under the influence of a drug and does what he is told to do,

It was a grand affair which seldom took place in that little village. It was all excitement. I was carried in procession every evening on horse back, with a band playing and dancing girls heading the procession.

Parties were given sucessively for seven days.

The whole thing was over and every body seemed happy excepting one. This was another uncle of mine who was in service and who had come during my mother's illness by taking an indefinite leave without pay. He was the only one who understood me and knew about my unhappiness. He had arrived there, when he knew that I had come.

When I returned to Delhi the whole thing seemed to me like a horrid dream and in a few day's time I was again my former self. I devoted myself to studies for the ensuing year and a half, and was able to get my degree.

During the interval my cousins were married and my uncle had died just after their marriage by heart failure. My aunt was on her death bed and she also expired three days after my results were published.

Again I was left all alone in this world. The effect of these deaths on me was practically nil. These shocks one after another made my nature of such a type that I took them to be the general course of life and became practically immune from them. No one could hurt me any further. I took life as it came and never bothered about the consequences.

CHAPTER V

Since my early childhood I had one thought always haunting my mind, and that was to see the foreign countries. How and when, I did not know. When I used to read small books like the High Roads of English Literature I used to think there might be a day when I might be able to see these heavenly places. I had seen a good many Europeans and could imagine them into all sorts of funny dresses lounging about in a great historic hall of a king or a manorial lord. I dreamt of those places as of the pleasantest possible climate and the whole country like a garden where there was no misery and every one must be happy. I thought that if I could reach there any way, I would ask one of these lords to keep me as one of his menials and stay in that happy land as long as I live.

I had a lust for travelling. During the holidays I used to go to different places visiting a

good number of cities, towns and villages in different parts of India. I saw it from north to south and east to west. I tried to understand their language, ways and customs, which were different from mine.

Some one told me that if ever I went to England, there the city of London was such a big place that I would get lost and never be found. I believed him all in sincerity. I thought that the best thing would be to go to Calcutta, because that would give me some idea, as it was the second largest city of the British Empire.

After a few days I found myself in Calcutta and went to places like the China Bazar, Chitpore Road and so on, and tried to loose myself; but was unable to do so. I was terribly disappointed and returned to Delhi in a dejected mood.

I told one of my professors that I was intending to go to England. He said, "I don't want to discourage you and I wish you all success, but I don't see how you will be able to go, because I happen to know about your private affairs. The few thousands of rupees which you might be able to gather will not be sufficient for your passage and a few months' stay. You are not a brilliant student; therefore, I don't think you will be able to get through in

any of the competitive examinations, which would have taken you to that country. There is one way out and that is if you could induce some of the fellows of your community to help you; because they are fabulously rich and if this gets into their brain all your troubles will be over. But they are so orthodox that this seems next to impossible. Not to speak of helping you they will try to put every possible obstacle in your way. They will threaten to throw you out of the community. But there is no harm in trying."

I took his advice and went from Calcutta to Bombay to meet every big fellow in the community but was unable to get even a penny out of them. The only thing I did was to spend some of my own money by going to these different places.

They said, "On what grounds do you ask for help? Do you want to commit an act against your religion? If you really think so then you must be mad. You are trying to do what no man of our community has ever dared to do. By going to a foreign county you will be eating each and every thing prepared by all sorts of people. Besides, crossing the sea is against religion for high caste Hindus. By doing these things you want to put us to shame and still you have got the audacity to ask for help.

There are thousands of other students who more deserve to receive education in this country."

All that they said was true and I was sorry having spent all that money. I took the passport quietly and was busy in converting all I possessed into cash. I sold my mother's ornaments. The money which was given to some friends was demanded back. All that I could get hold of was put into a bank on current account. That did not amount to much..

There were two more things to be done. One was to sell the house at Benares and the other was to ask back the money which was lent to the father of a friend of mine by my father, and their house was mortgaged as security. Both the contracting parties had expired and it was for us to settle the matter. It was a painful process. My friend was in difficulty and I didn't know how to ask him for money; but there was no way out of it and I had to ask him.

I went to Banars and explained to him everything in full detail. Then he said that the best way would be to find out another creditor, who would mortgage the house, so that I might have my money back. He thought that would be an easy matter, because the house was worth three times the necessary amount and

any one would be too glad to mortgage the house.

But there he was wrong. It was not as easy an affair, as he thought it to be. On the other hand it was too difficult. In that burning heat of the sun, we tramped the streets of Benares going from one money-lender to another; but no one was prepared to lend us the amount. Wherever we went there was the same blunt refusal. We spent nearly fifteen days but without any success.

My friend was as desirous of obtaining the money as I was. The reason of this trouble was that all these money-lenders happened to be members of my community. All of them were informed that I wanted money for a bad purpose. When they knew about this, then, not to speak of lending, even their behaviour was insulting.

At last we were told of a very big and educated landlord, who carried this type of business and leaving aside all other considerations, he might be prepared to lend us when we had explained to him everything in full detail.

This fat, old and worthy gentleman was a great philanthropist. He was in Government service for quite a long time and he was a title-holder. Everyone, if not actually liked, at least

respected him. He did big things only when there was personal gain or the earning of a big name.

We walked a distance of three miles because the gentleman lived outside the city. We explained our purpose to his private secretary and he was kind enough to take us to that gentleman and he explained to him the reason of our visit.

We had taken the mortgage deeds, the map of the house and every necessary document with us. After a cursory glance he said, "The house is not worth the amount, which you imagine it to be. I am sorry I can't lend the money."

I said, "Perhaps from business point of view you are right, but we have come for help and, having heard so much about your kindness, we thought that you might be able to help us."

"Help !! what kind of help do you want ? There are thousands of fellows like you who come daily for help. I have heard similar stories before. You want to run away with my money to England and see me bankrupt. I suppose these are your intentions. I am sorry you will have to find another fool. All your attempts here will be useless."

The way in which he shouted the word 'help' made the servants think that he really wanted

some help and they were peeping through the windows; but seeing everything peaceful they retired quietly. His huge figure swayed to and fro into the rocking chair and he was angry. We stood with folded hands all the time when the conversation was going on. We were standing with that expectant feeling, nay actually worshipping him, so that he might grant our prayers because he was charitable; but nothing came out of it.

If we had prayed the Almighty for the same amount of time at least our souls would have been comforted. That was the time when I felt that this world was all delusion. I felt like one who had committed some heinous crime. The reason was that I was sure of success at this last ?? The after-effects of this were that I was actually ill for three days.

I was sorry for my friend Kishan because I made that poor boy suffer who was already suffering. Kishan didn't care a bit about his suffering. At least he did not show it outwardly. When he knew of my illness he came to comfort me and said, 'If worst comes to worst I will sell the house and see that you go to England. Every one will be eager to buy when he knows that it is going dirt cheap.'

I knew he would have done what he said

because he was in earnest; but I would not have allowed him. I wouldn't have been so mean as to make Kishen and his family homeless. Adding a few more pounds to my little collection would not have amounted to much. All of it would have been sufficient for a year's education and the passage money; but I wanted to stay there at least for five years and see the world the way in which I wanted to see it. I made Kishen suffer so much that my whole conscience revolted. Instead of getting the debt transferred I felt like giving him every penny I possessed and running away to a place where no one should know me.

But as luck would have it some one came whom I knew very well and said, "I am prepared to transfer the debt and give you cash. I will give your friend something more than he owes you, so that it will temporarily get him out of the difficulty. I am not doing it as a favour; but as a sound business proposition. The rate of interest is going to be sixteen per cent per annum. The little deeds must be handed over to me and the mortgage should be effected through the court. I will tell Kishen and if he agrees, you can have the cash tomorrow."

The rate of interest was too high but Kishen would hear nothing. He wanted to see the

whole thing settled as quickly as possible; because he himself wanted some cash immediately. Besides, the man was honest and business like.

All I had was into liquid assets and I could use it freely as I wanted to. During the interval when I was busy making all these preparations my friends used to talk a good deal about me. For a few days it was nothing else but me. Some thought that I was mad. Others said that my parents were those miserly Jews, who had collected a good bit, though they appeared poor outwardly, and that I was going to spend that ill-gotten money in a few days' time. Wherever I went, from a child to an old man, every one used to tease me saying that I was the one who was going to England. You can imagine how I felt when these things were told on my very face.

Few of my friends who were interested in my welfare used to come and advise in all sincerity, "We wish you all success, but we can't see how you are going to manage. There is nothing extra-ordinary about you. Perhaps you are full of ideas by reading the books written by those great people who went penniless to those foreign countries and afterwards turned out to be great men. In your case, we see nothing but failure in all your

under taking. No harm has been done so far. You are married. You must lead a settled life and try to find out a job or start some business. You can cancel all your arrangements and tell every one that you are not going because you haven't received the help which you were expecting. For a few days people might talk that you have come back to your senses and so on; but after a few days time everything will go on just the same."

I thanked them for their kind and sincere advice; but they didn't know what was going on in my mind. The first thing was that I wanted to see the world in my own crude idiotic fashion and the first objective was England; after that if possible to receive some further education.

I wrote to my uncle who is my father's younger brother and who was in service; that I was going to England and that I wanted to see him before I went. His name happens to be Bharat. He is the only one who is a real good friend, and near and dear to my heart among my relatives.

A few days after receiving my letter uncle Bharat went to Sitapur and arrived at Benares the same evening bringing my wife along with him. He knew a long time before that I

wanted to go to England, therefore, my letter was not a surprise for him; and he knew perfectly well that nothing on earth could stop me.

I was left alone with my wife. It was the queerest feeling which I ever had in my life. We were standing facing each other. I a lad of seventeen and she a child of eleven. We were told that our relations were that of a husband and a wife; but we didn't know what they were? I on my part did understand something about these things and I was sorry for myself as well as for her.

She was staring at me with those astonished eyes which seemed to convey, "All this is beyond me. Every one starting from my father and mother tells me that you are my god. It is my divine duty to be your slave. I am to obey you implicitly and never to utter a disrespectfull word. I am supposed to sacrifice everything for your sake whom I do not know.

"You are just as good a stranger to me as the man from the moon. I love my people and like my friends, perhaps I even love some of them in a different way; but about you I do not care."

Perhaps all these thoughts did not run in her mind in a logical order of sequence;

but to me her eyes conveyed all this at once. That, scornful look seemed to demand her freedom beyond which she did not want anything else.

I was in an advising mood and said, "I am sorry all this has happened. I am sorry for you and for myself. I do not love you and you don't even care for me. You are as free as you were before. I would never interfere with you in future; because I myself want to be free. I am going away to a land about which you do not know. Perhaps I may never come back; therefore, good-bye."

It seemed that my whole body was burning and my face was red hot. I was besides myself. During the last few days I was thinking over these things and I had decided to say so many things; but when it came to actual facts I could utter only few of those broken sentences and ran out of the room.

It was a funny meeting with my wife. She was relieved and was happy; happy because in a day or two she would again be with her parents and playmates.

Uncle Bharat was waiting outside the room and he had heard everything; because it was loud enough for any one; but he didn't utter a word. There was that blank expression upon

his face which showed that even if he had heard everything he was not inclined to talk about it.

"Ganesh, I suppose you are leaving for Bombay by tomorrow morning's express. I won't be able to accompany you to Bombay and I don't think anybody will. I have no advice to give except that do what you want to do. Do what your conscience tells you to do and be good. Here is a draft for thirty pounds. Accept it; if you won't, it would hurt me very much. This is all I possess and it is yours. Now don't think of the consequences. You want to go therefore the sooner the better. If you hesitate you may never get a chance. You can make it no safer and to a man of action opportunities are duties. I will send you what I can. If some body is prepared to buy me I will sell myself and send you the amount."

All he said was true and sincere and I was happy beyond imagination, I had forgotten the past and the future, and the present was all happiness. All this was momentary because again I started thinking about tomorrow's programme.

Seeing me gloomy again uncle shook me with a jerk and said, "Cheer up my lad. If you don't want to go, give up the idea but don't be unhappy."

I looked up with a sudden expression of pain upon my face and said, "You hurt me, uncle, please be gentle. You know perfectly well that nothing on earth can change my mind therefore why say such things."

He smiled, "I am sure you have made all necessary arrangements and now let us go for a walk."

"Yes, I think that is a splendid idea, let us walk till I am dead tired. I have my passport ready. I had written to Cook's and they have reserved the passage for me stating that when I arrive at Bombay, they will give me the passage ticket."

We returned very late that evening, but found a good number of my friends waiting for me. When they were sure that I was leaving the following morning they wanted to spend their last evening with me. We talked about all sorts of things. They left at about midnight saying that I must have a sound sleep because I have a tedious journey ahead. I couldn't sleep that night.

In the morning I was at the station some twenty minutes before the train left for Bombay. Dozens of people were present at the station to see me off, among whom were friends relatives and acquaintances. Many presents were given to me and I was heavily

garlanded. Seeing me surrounded by so many persons a curious crowd had collected around wondering, what the matter was. Two minutes before the train left I said good-bye to all of them. It seemed that all those familiar faces would disappear altogether from my life, I embraced my uncle and got into the compartment. At that time there was a piteous look in uncle Bharat's eyes. When I looked at him I knew that I was losing something very dear. My head was going round and round; and his was the only face I could see. He was crying and so was I. People in my compartment were saying all sorts of things but I didn't listen to anything and cried to my heart's content and fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI

When I woke up I was thinking of the future because there was no time to think of the past.

It was a strange feeling. The land which was so familiar, about which I never used to care, seemed so wonderful that every bush appeared of indefinite interest. It seemed to me that I was being carried away to a strange world and felt like a little adventurer.

The next morning I was at Bombay. After leaving my things into a cheap hotel I went to Cook's Agency. I showed them their letter and wanted the passage ticket.

I was taken to an elderly gentleman, who was very kind and polite. He said, "Sir, I have reserved the cheapest first class passage for you and the steamer leaves tomorrow. If you would be kind enough to give me a cheque for the amount, I will give you the ticket."

"There must be some mistake I didn't ask for the cheapest first class passage; but for the cheapest. It may be tourist or the third."

I am sorry there has been a misunderstanding. When cheapest reservations are asked at such a short notice it is generally for the first class; because tourist and third class reservations are made weeks before."

"But I must leave in a day or two; because I have to appear for the preliminary Solicitor's Examination and I must be there in time. I am a poor student and it would be very kind of you if you could do something for me."

At that time I realised my mistake. I thought that it was just like buying a railway ticket. The reason for all the blunders which I committed was that I was ignorant about everything. I didn't know any one who had been to foreign countries and was reluctant to meet any stranger due to my poor condition. I was afraid that if I asked any question the person questioned might laugh at me.

For a few moments the gentleman looked keenly at my face and seeing me quite in earnest said, "I am sorry my lad; but as far as we are concerned you won't be able to leave from Bombay for an other fortnight. But there is one way out of the difficulty. Day after tomorrow

there is a boat leaving from Colombo and if you leave by the evening train you might be able to catch it. I will send them a wire to make sure of the accomodation. you can come within a couple hours. If everything is alright, I will give you the passage and the railway tickets."

I left the office with mixed feelings, uncertain as to what might happen. I wanted to leave the country as early as possible due to many reasons. Firstly I was afraid that I might receive a letter from my uncle asking me not to go; secondly some extraneous authorities might stop me, because I was told that if you cannot give any proof that you have sufficient means to last for the time you are going to stay in England, you are not allowed to go that country and, lastly, I wanted there to be in time; because I wanted the exemption from the preliminary examination. So I loafed about in the streets of the surrouding area for about two hours and went again to the old gentleman.

He had everything ready for me. All I had to do was to give him the money. He gave me the passage as well as the railway ticket to Colombo. I felt really obliged to this gentleman and wanted to give him something by way of a present; but he said that it would be better utilised if it remained with me.

I got into Madras Mail. There were two other English officers with me who were going to Madras. It was my first time to sleep in the same compartment with Englishmen. I felt very uncomfortable in the morning. I got acquainted with them, and they wanted that I should have breakfast with them. This was my first time to eat with persons who were not of my creed. I had mixed freely with Europeans and Mohammdans; but I had never eaten anything touched by them; although I wanted to do this since a very long time.

I could not eat much, but it seemed to me that I was doing something very great. At the same time it appeared that I was going down and down; because I was no more that high class Hindu. In any case I would have been required to do so, therefore the sooner the better. It would have been otherwise impossible for me to live. I am not one of those Indian saints who could live on fruit and milk.

with the exception of some minor incidents I got safely on board the steamer at Colombo. At that time I gave a sigh of relief. I knew something extraordinary must happen in order to bring me back, once the ship starts moving. Now I was heading for the country which I was longing to see; about which I have been thinking since my early childhood.

That evening I shut myself in my cabin and did not get out of it even for my meals. At about midnight the ship started on her voyage and in the morning I found myself in the Indian Ocean. There was water all around and nothing else. I felt a bit sick but I said to myself that I should not be sea-sick. There is three weeks voyage and if I am not strong enough I may fall ill.

All these resolutions were of no avail. The Arabian Sea was very rough and it seemed that the ship might go down any moment. I was sea-sick for the following two days and it took me another two days to recover. After that I was quite well but I could not eat much. The only things I took were bread, boiled vegetables, fruit and milk.

During these days I got used to the surroundings. All the passengers on board the steamer seemed to me great men and I an insignificant creature who was trying to imitate them.

Besides myself there was another Indian and a Ceylonese gentleman who was not prepared to call himself an Indian and I do not blame him either for doing this, because there are so many reasons which need not be explained here.

Gradually I came to know most of the passengers on board the steamer. It was a curious collection of people and it is always so when you are travelling. There was a film actress from Holly-wood and two young rich Yankees were following her all the way from Frisco to Sydney. She had married an old, but rich Australian, who was thinking that on this ship he might be able to enjoy a quiet and pleasant honey-moon, but to his horror he found that those two lads were following her and had occupied a suite exactly in front of theirs. For a time the boys tried to pretend that they did not know this new bride; but this could not go on for long. In the end she had to introduce them to her husband as her childhood friends. After the introduction the old man found that his wife could spare very little time for him. He dared not quarrel with any of them; because he was afraid of his wife. All the time she was found in different dresses; and she was the centre of attraction on board the steamer.

A dramatic Company was also returning back to England which had been on tour to Australia and Newzealand; and it was an excellent source of entertainment by giving us a different play every week.

There were two London girls who were

repatriated from Australia owing to their bad character and they provided plenty of excitement for the passengers all through the voyage. Two Maltese were after one of these girls. When one of them knew that the other was with her in the cabin, he took out a revolver and fired at him. It was not to kill but to frighten him. The whole matter reached the ears of the Captain and it seemed that they would be locked and handed to the Police authorities at Malta for trial, but the whole matter was hushed up.

There were about twenty-five Maltese passengers and all of them gathered in the smoke room and called in the two offenders. There was heated discussion for nearly two hours. For the time being it seemed that these Maltese had divided themselves into two parties and might be at each other's throat any moment. If that had happened I do not know what would have been the consequences. I was all excitement and was trying to understand their conversation but it was a vain attempt. In the end the whole thing was settled amicably and both the rivals emerged out of the smoke room as good friends as they ever were, and there was much drinking and excitement.

The Captain arrived nearly half an hour after this settlement. I am sure he knew ever-

thing about the whole affair when the shot was fired; but he conveniently managed to be busy during all this time and pretended as though he knew nothing about it. Captains are very clever people and if they have an idea that such matters would be settled between the passengers themselves, they make it a point not to interfere. If they were to meddle in each and every affair then the life on board the steamer would become unbearable. Besides it would give a bad name to the steamer, the company and the Captain himself. The press is always after some kind of exciting news and all sorts of fantastic shapes are given to that little bit of truth. There fore the captains who interfere with the passengers as little as possible are wiser, because to the captain passengers are just like passers-by in the street, whom he may never meet in life again.

When the Captain entered the smokeroom he appeared to be very rough and perturbed. He asked " what is the row about ? It is a ship and not a battle ground. Any person creating a disturbance is liable to prosecution. "

One of the Maltese replied, " Nothing Captain, there was a little bit of misunderstanding between two friends; but now the whole matter has been settled amicably. "

" But a sailor told me that he had heard a

distinct shot and I must arrest the persons concerned."

But of course no one had told him any such thing.

"May be it is one of these boys from the dramatic company who might have fired a cracker," suggested a wise fool, as though the Captain did not know the difference between a pistol shot and a cracker fire.

The captain gave one of these contemptible stares which meant to say "Shut up you fool I know everything." He ordered that a thorough search should be made of cabins of the persons concerned, and all other possible places to find out if there was any pistol in their possession; but nothing could be found. He said that none of the Maltese should mix with those girls and advised others to avoid them.

For a day or two everything was quiet, but after that it was just the same.

There were others like army officers, sailors, traders, young girls going back to their motherland, civilians, old people who had plenty of money and nothing to do and pleasure-seekers—just the sort of usual crowd, which you generally find on board the steamer.

Beside these there was one other person whose doings affected me most. His actions made me utterly miserable for a good number

of days. This was a young Scotch boy of about twentyfive who was returning to London in the hope that he might be able to do something profitable there. He was employed by some planter in Ceylon; but was turned out due to bad character. There was no possibility for him to get any kind of honest employment in Ceylon; therefore, the only thing for him was to return back to London.

He got friendly with the Indian and the Ceylonese gentleman. He was a frequent visitor of their Cabins, whether in their presence or absence and he spent most of his time with them. He took us round Port Said and showed us everything, whether good or bad. Spent freely not only on himself, but something on us as well as though we were his best and the oldest friends. For the time being I began to wonder at the goodness, generosity and large heartedness of the man; but something told me that it could not be so.

Two or three days before reaching Port Said the Indian gentleman lost few of his pounds. He could not suspect any one, therefore he was powerless. He thought it prudent under the circumstances to deposit every valuable with the purser and keep a little bit with him as pocket expenses. He reported the loss to the authorities concerned.

The Ceylonese gentleman though he had lost a few pounds, thought that he might have spent the amount. He was bit of a dandy. He changed his clothes nearly six times a day and showed his blazer of University College London saying that he was a law student there and stayed into that country for nearly three years. He thought, it would create a favourable impression upon the people there; but those who were simple and better mannered were liked. He displayed his silver brushes, gold watches and other valuable things one by one. He was a constant visitor to the purser's office to report his losses. After that he started to lock his things, but the climax was when his handbag was cut open by his razor and money taken out of it when he was having a jolly good time in the Smoke Room.

When he discovered his loss he was very angry and said to the purser, "What kind of ship is this, where things are stolen daily and all the officials are powerless."

"I am sorry I cannot do anything. I had told you so many times to deposit all your valuables with me, but uptil now you have not done so. We are not responsible for any of your losses unless the things are deposited with us. Besides all the passengers here are thorough gentleman and I cannot suspect any one as far as

such things are concerned. As regards the employces—well, they are in service since a very long time and there is no new man and no such thing has ever happened before.”

The Ceylonese gentleman had to return to his cabin without a word; but it would have been interesting to hear his thoughts. The very same evening the purser said to some of the passengers, with whom he was friendly, “I don’t understand, why these Indians alone are losing all their belongings; no one else has lost even a penny. I can find only two solutions to the problem. Either they are bent upon giving a bad name to the Steamer and the Company; or one of them is a thief who has been collecting all these things.”

I knew that indirectly it meant myself and the thought itself sent a shudder through my frame. Late in the evening the Ceylonese gentleman came in my Cabin and after a friendly talk, he wanted to know how much money I possessed and for what purpose I was going to England. I told him every thing and showed him the amount of money I possessed, which was three hundred pounds. One hundred and fifty in the form of Cook’s traveller’s cheques and the remaining hundred and fifty being a draft on the Imperial Bank of India. I possessed only one suit case and he was looking curiously at the

contents, when I opened it. His suspicions were allayed a bit, when he had made a thorough inquiry. I do not know whether the idea was his own or the suggestion was from the purser. My Indian friend on the other hand did not bother because he was careful.

My brain was clouded with all sorts of thoughts as soon as he had left the cabin. I could not sleep even for a minute during that night. I was afraid about myself and I turned everything up side down. All the time I was thinking, "Suppose the thief has heard about the remark and suppose he is afraid that he might be caught then he might try to throw all those things in my cabin. If this be the case what would become of me?"

This was the reason that I had searched my cabin. If he had already thrown them in my cabin, then the only thing I would have done was to throw them through the parthole into the sea. Suppose the things were really found in my cabin, then I had not the courage to go to the Captain and tell him everything in full detail; because no one would have believed the truth, and every one would have thought it to be a made up story. Later on if the thief were caught and if he confessed that he had hidden the stolen articles in my cabin in order to avoid arrest, then I would have said, "Yes I found

them in my cabin and I threw them into the sea because I was afraid; and now I am prepared to pay the price of the articles."

Under such circumstances I would have been convicted as a thief; because no other proof would have been necessary. Who was there to protect me? What would have become of me? My whole life would have been ruined. I might have faught all these supposed troubles if they had actually happened; but the burden might have been so heavy that it might have destroyed me; because what I was trying to do was already too much for me. What would have my friends and relatives thought about me, and I would not have been in a position to show them my face.

In the morning when I locked in to the mirror I was quite haggard. I locked the cabin, when I got out of it. Had my breakfast quietly, without talking to any one and had occupied a chair in the far corner of the upper deck and was engulfed in my own thoughts.

I was found in such a position by a person whom I may be entitled to call a friend. This was an English philosopher who was visiting Europe twenty sixth or twenty seventh time. He had decided to stay in the country with an English Baron for some time and after that he

was to go to France because he was specially invited by a French Count. He had written many volumes on philosophy and logic and he was a greatly respected person on the steamer.

I used to spend a good bit of time with him. Perhaps the reason was, as it is said that children and old men can get on very well together. I do not know, but I think there was a mutual liking between us. Besides myself he wanted to know a great deal about Indian thought and Hinduism; and I used to ask him all sorts of questions.

He came and sat by my side; shook me vigorously. and then said, "Cheer up my son, you should not be so sensitive, otherwise you will find it difficult to get on in this world. I have already scolded the purser for the idiotic expression of his thoughts; not alone but in front of the persons before whom he had made the statement. He has apologised openly for his folly."

You cannot imagine how much relief it brought me. I was so happy, that I cried like a baby for more than twenty minutes, and the wonder of it is that the philosopher allowed me to cry undisturbed. Then I told him every thing in full detail. What was going on in my mind and how I had passed a sleepless and horrid night.

When I had finished, he said, "I can pretty well imagine what was going on in your mind. As a matter of fact I did come to your cabin but found it locked. Thinking that you were fast asleep I left you undisturbed. If I had known that you were troubled to such an extent I would have forced you to unlock the cabin. Then your mind would have been at ease and all these horrid thoughts would have been unnecessary."

"If my thoughts had taken a tangible shape you know the consequences. Who would have protected me and what would have been my fate?"

"I would have protected you. You are under English jurisdiction and it is not so easy as you imagine it to be. I have some power and influence too. Remember one thing that those who are really honest are never in trouble. If sometimes they are in little trouble it is just to remind them, not to deviate from the path of honesty. I know the thief and I have made arrangement to catch him red-handed."

I smiled and that smile was of satisfaction and happiness. After that the old man left me without a word, because he knew that I was greatly relieved and I would mix freely with everyone. At that time I knew that I had a real good friend during the course of my voyage,

who would help me in any difficulty. That very evening I came to know that he had reproved the Ceylonese gentleman as well for his thoughtless action. I was pointed out as the friend of that old man and people tried to talk with me on various subjects.

CHAPTER VII

My thoughts began to wander on the happenings at Port Said. We reached there about four in the evening and immediately every passenger was on shore, because it was the first stop after having spent a long time on sea from Colombo. Every one found something to interest him and suitable to his taste. Our party consisted of a middle-aged Australian, a Maltese boy, the Scotch boy about whom I have already mentioned, the Ceylonese and we two Indians. Thus it was a curious conglomeration. We had plenty of time at our disposal, because the ship was to leave at about four in the morning.

After seeing cafes, dancing halls, and the like, we decided to see something exciting. We were pestered all along by those fat Egyptians that they would show us very nice girls of all nationalities and many wonderful things if we could accompany them.

I suppose this was repeated monotonously in all the languages known to mankind, with such an accuracy and rapidity that every visitor must have wondered at those curious human beings. Every one of the party said no to these people, we walked quickly taking no notice of them. About eight in the evening we felt tired because we had seen everything worth seeing.

In the end the Scotch boy said, "There is no harm, let us go and have some fun. We may never get a chance and if we have not seen these places, we cannot say that we have seen Port Said."

Some of them showed some reluctance, but in the end every one decided to go. As far as I was concerned I did not know, what I was doing at that time. One or two of us were very well acquainted with those places because we did not need any guide. While we were heading for the places my question arose.

The Australian said, "I do not think that it is advisable that we should take this lad, because he is too young for such things."

The Scotchman said, "Oh, it is all right. He is growing, he is travelling alone, and therefore he must know about such things, and who knows he might be knowing already about them."

I protested, "But I have no money and there you want plenty of it."

The Scotch said, "It is alright, You neednot be worried about that I will lend you as much as you want."

The Australian intervened, "No fear, he doesnot require any money. I will pay one or two shillings which are necessary for his entry and he need not return that amount; beyond that he is not going to do anything so long as I am there. If you do not agree I am prepared to leave the party and if the kid wants he can accompany me back to the steamer."

Everyone was quiet. It meant that they had agreed to his proposal. Then the party was heading for those immoral houses. The trouble with me was that I was afraid and curious at the same time. Afraid because I imagined trouble at every place and therefore was very cautious. Curious because I wanted to see something which I had never seen; but at the same time something within was telling me that it was not good. It would be bad if we got into trouble at this strange place. Anyhow we were at the gates of one of these houses.

When we were about to enter we were surrounded by half a dozen fat and ugly Egyptians. Seeing us with no agent of those houses

all of them started shouting at the same time, "Look here mister, come with us. That house is no good, bad women, bad people. I take no money. Everything nice mister, if do not like, come out; but that house no good."

What to say of seeing anything, it seemed for a time that we might be in trouble. Every member of the party was being pulled in all direction. There would have been no trouble if we had an agent.

In the end one of them thought that he might be able to get some money from the house and he said, "It is all right, go mister if you want; the house not so bad."

At this the other Egyptians were furious and stood in front of the house. They would not allow any one to enter and at the same time they started quarreling with the one who had made this remark.

Two of them shouted, "Mister, this Egypt, do what we tell; no and plenty trouble. You miss boat."

One of our party said, "Leave us alone, otherwise we will call the police, and they will arrest all of you."

"No fear police mister, we pay, police do what we tell and plenty trouble."

I was on the verge of crying. I would have run as fast as my legs would have carried me but they would not move. I could not see anything. I could only hear some howling voices and that was all. I might have fainted, but I do not know how I stood there just like a statue. All that was happening was beyond me.

In the end the person who had brought us without an agent shouted, "Get aside you dogs; otherwise first I shoot and then talk. I have been watching the fun all this time. I can take you to places in Port Said, which some of you have never seen in life."

All of them cooled down and their temper disappeared. They melted like snow before the blazing sun. All was quiet and the women from the top were watching us with curious eyes.

The man who had made them disappear laughed again and again and then said, "Was not it a fun to watch these fibing idiots making all sorts of noise. When I found that they were getting on your nerves I had to make them disappear. Now let us go in. I will see if there are any changes or the place is just the same."

He proceeded up the steps, all of us follow-

ing, as though he was the owner of it. The reason was that he had often visited the places and he knew every nook and corner of it. He was very well acquainted with the inmates of the building, because he was greeted like an old friend. There was something sinister about the man, but he was honest beyond doubt. He knew that he was bad and he never tried to hide it. That was the reason people liked him, because they knew that they need not be afraid of him. He was a dare-devil and afraid of nothing. Inwardly he might have repented for his evil deeds, but outwardly he said, that that was his moral standard. He did what he liked and never cared for the consequences. This curious being was none else but the middle-aged Australian. He had no weapon. It was a mere bluff but it was very effective.

When we reached the top, a huge door was automatically swung open. We found ourselves in a big room somewhere about thirty feet long and twenty feet wide. It was very luxuriously decorated, rather over-furnished. It would not be wrong to call it a mirror hall because there were mirrors all around. There was a red velvet carpet and quaint type of green velvet furniture was disorderly scattered in the room. Some of us had never seen such a thing before and were looking all round with wonder.

and astonishment. One of the mirrors in the corner started moving and I thought there was something wrong; but in reality it was a door and a fat French woman entered the room.

She greeted two of the party in a very familiar fashion, "You bad boys, where had you been for such a long time? I suppose enjoying somewhere else, eh! You both at different times said that you would come very soon, but I see your blooming faces after a long time. You ought to have seen me earlier, but never mind I am glad to see all of you."

She said all this in such a fashion as though it was in their power to visit Port Said often and it was their business. They did not reply to all this but made themselves comfortable on two sofas.

The remaining four of the party were standing in a corner like mute creatures. First she looked at us, then pointing towards the Australian she continued, "Suppose, Your friends eh? Ask them to sit down, glad to see them all."

When we were about to occupy different chairs the Australian shouted towards me, "Say kid, sit yourself down on the chair in the corner and see the fun."

The fat woman clapped and the mirrors

which seemed fixed started moving because in reality they were doors and the room was filled with nearly two dozen half-dressed girls of different nationalities.

The Australian who was lying at ease on a Sofa said, "With the exception of one or two, all old stuff. Why do not you get some new ones, you old hussy."

The French woman replied, "I do not make them, if they come good, if not I cannot help it."

These girls surrounded the visitors in groups of four or five. When one or two of them were coming towards me the Australian shouted, "Hey? leave the kid alone, come here."

The Frenchwoman smiled and said, "Your son, I suppose. Then why bring him here."

"Shut up you old fool. Keep a civil tongue in your mouth; otherwise a box on the jaw and the remaining teeth will be out of your mouth."

This remark and nobody came near me. I was just like a spectator of a drama or a cinema. The girls asked for wine, as was their custom, which I came to know later on. At once three bottles were opened and emptied in a few minutes' time. They asked for more; but those who knew the place said that no more was necessary. I am sure others might have consented to have a few more bottles; but when

they came to know that they would be required to pay six pounds for the drinks which they offered to these girls, they came to their senses.

It was really interesting to watch the faces of these girls. Some of them were personifications of passion, lust, greed, avarice, deceit, treachery and every other vice known to humanity. They would be prepared to do any kind of crime for the sake of momentary enjoyment. To them the destruction of human life meant nothing. The thing which they called their enjoyment was the sole purpose of their life. This type was very fierce and I think the new-comers to such places were afraid of them. It was really such as were in majority among these girls. There were others who possessed no character and were very weak; seeing no other means of livelihood they had adopted this type of life. A few of the faces indicated that there was some good in them and they were kind. These were the only ones who were reluctant to meet any newcomer. Their legs would not move, but there was some fear which was goading them to move forward. There was something very tragic about these faces and it would have been really interesting to listen to their previous history. Who knows whether they were tricked and were under the influence of some evil power

from which it was impossible to escape, Their only thought seemed that if they could run away from this living hell, they would lead an honest and moral life.

After half an hour we were taken up in another room by means of a lift. It was very well decorated and there was some kind of sweet smell in the room. Lighting arrangements made in the room were such that the lights kept on changing colours every few minutes. There was more drinking, and this time by the visitors as well. My patron caught hold of me and made me sit beside him. He was the only one who had quite a good number of drinks downstairs as well. After a few minutes there was naked dancing and the fat old lady started asking people if they would like to go into private rooms.

By that time the Australian had his fill and got up staggering. He caught hold of me and said, "Say, kid, let us get back to the steamer, it is getting late." After that he gave a little slap to the Frenchwoman and she smiled in return saying, "Hoping to see you soon." To me it appeared that this was his usual way of saying good-bye at such places.

He caught hold of me firmly and said, "I am not so tight as you imagine me to be, I am quite sober but I cannot walk straight." Here is

a ten-bob note and you will have to carry me back to the steamer. You can give me the change in the morning."

I had to do nothing. He called a taxi and found his way. I had to pay the fare and keep the change till the following morning. While we were in the taxi he told me, "Kid, these places are very bad. I am telling you, if you do not know. Take it from me; it is the truth. Always run away from them."

In the morning I found the Australian walking on the upper deck looking quite fresh and cheerful. I returned him his change and at the same time the Breakfast bell rang. Both of us came down to have our breakfast. There I came to know that two of the party followed us only a few minutes after and the remaining three stayed there till two in the morning. It was really interesting to watch their haggard, swollen and dissipated faces at lunch time. They said that they did not mind giving the last farthing which they had at that time; but they did enjoy and enjoyed to their heart's content. Two of them had bought some white stuff, which they said was cocaine and was heavenly when one stayed at such places. I do not know whether it was interesting or horrid to listen to their elaborate account. But the look on their

faces and the illness which followed needed no explanation.

CHAPTER VIII.

Late in the afternoon I found my old friend sitting in the library all alone. As soon as I entered he looked up and I apologised for disturbing him, but he said, "That is all right, son. I have finished the book and let us have a walk on the deck."

I told him everything about my adventures at Port Said. He said, "Bob is an old fellow and a very interesting subject for my study. I am glad that the circumstances were in your favour and you were away from everything. If he were not in your company, I do not know what would have happened and how you would have acted under different circumstances. You must see everything in order to know what is good and what is bad, but never be a party to it. The child knows from the heat that fire will give it a burn, if it tries to catch, but if it pounces on it without knowing the consequences,

then the results are disastrous. There are different ways of knowing the same thing. We are all children as regards new things and must know whether they are good or bad in some harmless way. If people say that such and such thing is bad, then see it from a distance and if you know that it is bad then never go near it; but you must be sure about it and know it well."

"This is beyond me. Please talk of something ordinary and interesting."

"Then I will tell you something about you students who go to these Western countries for further studies. They may be divided under four categories. The first are the traditional type; who imagine themselves at the top and everything else not worth consideration. What they have inherited from their elders is best. There is no question of logic, bad or good; it is always good. When they come to these countries they think that they have broken up a great tradition and have done something very great. But that is going to be the limit and they are going to retain everything as it was. This type when it returns after its short stay, is just the same as it was before. Either it is afraid to change the system or finds it to advantage to be a champion of no change. People will say, "Look at him. After this travel and

education he has remained unaffected. He is the one who is to be trusted.' He takes a mean advantage by pushing himself up. He might have done something against his conscience as regards eating and drinking in these countries; but as soon as he goes back he poses that he has done nothing against traditions and reverts back to the old system. The only thing he does is to read some books, possibly the same and pass examinations. Beyond that he does not know anything but still he poses as though he knows everything."

112 "The second is a weak type but this may also be included under the heading of traditional, because it believes in traditional ideas. These boys first try to resist everything; but once led astray they are lost forever. They lose their morality and they lose everything. They might pass some examinations; but they have no principles. In reality they are not to be trusted for anything responsible. The trouble is that they pose that they are very good and want big jobs. If they do not get them then they are source of trouble not only to the Government but to the society as well. The third type is neither rational nor traditional, but a category by itself. They are generally sons of rich people, who would like to give their children full freedom. They think that

they must see everything as soon as they leave the shores of their countries. As things are, the only things which they see are bad and filthy ones. Good things do not interest them, therefore they will say that they are not worth seeing. Therefore those which are left are the bad ones. They start it at Port Said and once begun there is no end to it. After that getting money from home and enjoying themselves is the only end which they pursue. The trouble is that all these crazy idiots expect big jobs and great responsibility. All these types pose with obstinacy that they know everything about Western life and their word is final. The only thing which they know is bad and therefore their opinions are bound to be bad.

"The last is the rational type. It starts with the idea that it knows nothing and would try to learn everything possible under the circumstance. It never poses. What it does is known to everybody. It has no restrictions as regards eating and drinking. But as regards other things they have a limit beyond which they would not proceed. They generally stay for a longer time into these countries. Besides reading books they are educated in other things as well and these things are honesty, sobriety, morality, modesty and so on. They try to mix with every section of the society and try to

understand them. They go into villages and live with the inhabitants as they are living. This type when it lives with the family knows how to behave with its members and not like the other types which regards the young girls fit only for physical enjoyment. The rational type never sees them in that light. When the people of the place know that they are good, they mix freely with them and there is a better understanding. This type when it returns is generally very reserved. When these people are asked to give their opinion about Western life, the only thing they would say is that it would take a very long time and that they are not very well acquainted with the subject and it would be better to read books written by certain authorities. These are the ones who do some real good to the society; though by bits and they are not in the public eye."

I asked him, "You know much about us. How did you make this study?"

"I have lived for some time in India and mixed with your educated society. I have known a large number of you people in London as well. Besides, this is my twentyseventh voyage to London from Austrailia. I am seventy two years of age and I think I have some experience."

I asked him to tell me something more about

these things but all he said was, "Perhaps some other day," and that day never came, as long as we were together.

He looked at the watch and said, "It is nearly dinner time and let us get dressed for dinner. Remember one thing more; you are going to accompany me, when we get out at Malta."

Nothing remarkable happened till we reached Malta. The only thing in which I was interested was that the Captain had set detectives to watch the Scotch boy according to the old man's advice; because they wanted to catch him red-handed. I used to spend a good bit of time with my old friend and through him I came to know a good many passengers, most of them Australians and Englishmen. After that, my time on board the steamer was not so dull and tiresome.

We reached Malta early in the morning and we had the whole of the day at our disposal, because the ship was going to leave at about nine in evening. It was the month of November and I thought that Malta would be quite cold; but the English Winter changed my opinion. When we got out after breakfast our party consisted of my old friend; a British army officer, his wife and two children; an English solicitor, a Spanish lady and an Australian.

farmer. The first thing we did was to take a lift from the harbour up the hill. From there we had a view of the city and the harbour. Then I could realise why the British are so determined to retain Malta. That deep harbour surrounded all a around by rocks is a formidable sea fortrees. There is only one entrance which can easily be blocked and no fore gn ships can enter in case of war. It was the first time that I saw warships, and, not only that but an important section of the British Navy. Those war-ships, destroyes and aircraft carriers and other ships presented an impressive scene. It was really a thrill to see them. I had seen in the pictures, perhaps in dreams but never in reality. But there was one thing when I looked from the top of the hill, they appeared very small and insignificant before that mighty sea. When I turned my head those rock-cut roads seemed like a series of steps meant for a giant to climb the hill. People moving to and fro on these roads looked so small that the whole thing reminded me of Gulliver's Travels. We could see the island of Gozo which, I visited later in the day with the old philosopher.

After having a good view of the harbour we went to the historic Palace of knights of St. John. We could not see the whole of it because certain sections were occupied for official

purposes. Our next visit was to the Museum and St. John's Cathedral. Everything was explained to us not by the guide but by the old philosopher. We went into a small Maltese cafe and had our lunch there. Some of the member of our party felt tired and wanted to return back to the ship, specially the children and the Spanish lady. After some consultation all the rest decided to go back to the ship and have some rest except myself and my old friend.

When left alone, both of us tramped the streets and lanes of Malta. It was really interesting to watch the Maltese women dressed in black and a quaint black veil on their heads. Things like fruits, vegetables, bread and so on were being carried on donkeys' backs and children were driving them up and down the hill. Some of the old houses built in oriental fashion reminded me of home. In a small lane something which appeared like a house was really a teashop and there we had our tea. The charges were very little, but the things were very good.

The philosopher said, "Son Malta is more interesting and a better place, inspite of the things which you have seen at Port Said; but I am not going to take you there. There is a better place and that is the island of Gozo.

The motor boat will be leaving within twenty minutes' time and it will take us nearly ten minutes to get to the shore. I am going to take you there."

The boat was full of Maltese people and we were the only two foreigners there. My friend could understand Maltese very well and could speak a few broken sentences. When the passengers came to know about this, they started asking him all sorts of questions; and a good many of them were about me. As soon as we reached the island, we hired two donkeys and this the old man was able to arrange quite easily. We started to make a survey of the island.

The undulating hills; scattered farm houses, cool breeze, sea all round and the honest rustic faces left a memorable impression upon my mind. Mixed farming seemed to be the main occupation of the people; but grapes and making of wine were the most predominant. We bought plenty of grapes from a girl and they were very cheap. The grapes were worth only a few pennies but the old man asked me to give her half a crown. He told her that the remainder was for buying presents for her and for her little brothers and sisters. The girl was so pleased that she kissed both of us. I went red and blue in the face because it was the first

time that I was kised by a strange girl. It was nearly time for us to catch the boat which was going back to Malta. The little girl kept on waving till we were out of sight. That evening I was so happy and so full after having eaten so many things all the day long that I did not have any dinner and went straight to bed after reaching the steamer. I slept like a log. For days together I dreamt and thought about Malta and Gozo; and the beautiful things which I had seen there.

I used to spend a good bit of my time with the old man. Others on board were also quite nice and friendly. Playing with them, talking with them made the time pass unnoticed. We did not stop at Gibraltar, but when we were nearing it, flags were hung all over the steamer. Guns were fired from the steamer as well as from the fort. When asked I was told that it was an Australian mail steamer and salutes were being exchanged. People had gathered on the deck and were admiring the scenery all round. I felt like getting out and staying on the Spanish coasts for quite a long time. Those saw like mountains, little villages and beautiful sea coast were very pretty.

The bay of Biscay was very rough and the ship was being tossed up and down like a toy. The decks were washed by the waves every

minute. Very few of the passengers were seen outside, but I used to watch with a thrill these mountain-like waves for quite a long time.

We were in the midst of a thick fog when passing the Channel Islands. Here I did something unknowingly which made people talk for quite a long time. After dinner I went to sleep in my cabin as usual. During the night I heard guns being fired at regular intervals. I thought it was again some exchange of salutes like Gibraltar and had a sound sleep. In the morning I got up. Had my bath as usual and was ready for the breakfast. On the deck I found many passengers in half sleepy condition lying on deck chairs.

One of them seeing me said, "You are a strange fellow. What a dreadful night we had and still you are bright and cheerful."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Don't be funny. All the night we had to sit shivering on the upper deck and always in danger that the ship might strike against another any moment and go down. These English fogs are really horrid."

"I am sorry I did not know anything about it. I went to bed as usual after supper."

This made all the others jump from their chairs. Their sleep had vanished. They started.

talking and asking me all sorts of questions. I was surrounded by them; and the crowd went on increasing.

"Did not you hear the gong ring continuously for fifteen minutes."

"The announcement that every one should be on the upper deck was very loud and posters were hung in every corridor, that no one was to remain inside the ship."

"The guns fired at regular intervals to warn other ships were loud enough to keep any one awake."

"I do not understand how he could sleep?"

"Well, all the good luck to him, if he had no worry and a good night's rest."

In the end the lady who had accosted me said. "All said and done I think he is simply joking to make us cheerful."

"Believe it or not, it's the truth."

When all these people were busy talking, my old friend quietly asked me to come down for breakfast. There he tried to explain the philosophy of life and the effect of thoughts on brains; and then on the body indirectly, but it was all in vain because I do not remember a word of it though I nodded at that time-time as though I understood everything.

CHAPTER IX

The sight of Southampton thrilled me. At last I had reached the desired land. All the passengers who had lived together for such a long time were like strangers. With the exception of a few every one was busy meeting friends and relatives. They had forgotten even to say 'good-bye' to their newly made friends on the steamer. Every one was in a hurry to get on shore.

The Scotch boy was in the greatest hurry to get outside the Customs area. His only luggage was a suitcase which was very well packed. He did not know that some Scotland Yard people were already on the steamer and watching him keenly. Every passenger had to stand in line and show his luggage to the Customs Authorities. He jumped over the bench with his suitcase when everyone was busy. He thought he was out of danger, but this thing did not need a great amount of application on

the part of the two detectives.

They saw this and asked the policeman on duty to arrest him on a charge of trying to dodge the Customs Authorities. He was taken to a police station and was asked to open his suitcase. There all the valuables lost by passengers were found. The persons who had reported their losses were asked to indentify their belongings. They had to remain for another day at Southampton for his trial. The following morning he admitted every charge brought against him. Besides their articles he returned all the money he had and said that the rest he had spent. After that he threw himself at the mercy of the court.

There were no previous convictions and he was still a boy. The judge taking all these things into consideration discharged him on bail and condition of good behaviour for the following two years. I knew all these things later from my Indian friend. The old man on the other hand thought that taking his whole behaviour into consideration he ought to have been punished severely. He was not a lawyer. Law is fixed and considers facts only. Other considerations do not come in.

The Customs people had examined my luggage and I was waiting for a porter. My old

friend with his bag which contained all he possessed at that time came by my side and picked up my heaviest suitcase.

I protested, "It is too heavy. The porter is just coming."

"Not for me. Pick up the rest and follow me. If you have plenty of money give it to me. I will be able to utilise it in a better way."

I followed him without a word. He got into the train for London and we took our seats near the window, because the train was nearly empty. At that time I was watching the strong old man. I was wondering how could a man of his age be in such an excellent health and possess so much strength. I liked very much that curious little old man. Though our company was very short the memory has been a long one. When he saw me watching with that searching look in my eyes he smiled and gave me one of his autographed books.

"Read this and you may be able to understand me better. Perhaps we may meet again. By that time you would not be a boy but a grown up little man. Then I will ask you a good many little things about me. Just remember, fear nothing and do what you want."

I took the book without a word. The train started moving. I looked on both sides in

order to see as much as possible of the city; but I could see very little. Within a few minutes we were in the open country and every other thing was all new to me. I tried to take in as much as possible. I understood nothing but I was looking on both sides in order to see something wonderful. The train did not stop anywhere. It being a boat train the only stop was London.

After reaching London I was thinking of taking a taxi and going to the Indian Student's Y. M. C. A. in Gower street; but again the old man did not allow me to do this. He took my luggage and asked me to follow him. At the tube station he bought two tickets for Warren Street. I was startled to see the escalators. I was afraid of those moving stairs run by electricity; but I had to jump on them because the old man stepped on them quite easily and I thought that I was doing something very great. I did not know that they were going to be my daily means of conveyance. There was no accommodation at Gower Street. Those people wanted me to stay in a hotel in front of them but my friend did not like the idea and he took me to the Indian Students Hostel in Cromwell Road. There he saw me settled.

"Now you are fixed up for the time being

and gradually you will find your way out. Try to seek good company and that is one of the ways to remain good. For the night I am going to stay in a hotel. In the morning I will take the train for Durham and there I will stay for a month or two with my friend in the country. From there I will go to France and spend the summer."

We shook hands and at that time I was on the verge of crying. That was the last I had seen of my old friend. I do not think I shall ever be able to see him again. I have lost his book. I do not know how and when, and I have not been able to understand him. It seemed to me that I was again all alone but it never struck me that I had been alone all my life. I went straight into my room and threw myself on the bed; because my body was aching and I was wrecked with pain. There I cried and cried for a long time and I do not know why. I was wondering why did I come into this strange land. What was going to be the end of all this? Here, every one seems to be 'surrounded' by friends. They have happy looks on their faces. They have their parents to look after them. I was just like a stray bird who had flown into a forbidden territory and was sorry for the act. The maid came and told me that the dinner was ready; but I could not move and fell asleep.

I had a hot bath in the morning and felt a bit better. When I came down for breakfast, I looked round and every one seemed to be very well dressed. My clothes looked so funny that I was ashamed of myself. The first thing I did was to buy an overcoat. It was for two reasons. Firstly it was very cold and secondly it covered me completely. Later on I got other clothes prepared, but still I thought myself unfit for that high society.

I was not the only one. There was a good number of other new arrivals. All of them seemed so busy that they did not have enough time even for meals. Some of them were really busy and worried. They wanted to get themselves admitted into some institution. If they were to remain in London then they had to find some suitable boarding house or family and begin their studies as early as possible. If they were to go in the provinces then also it must be settled as quickly as possible. Others were busy for nothing. It did not matter when, where, and how they got admitted, because it was of secondary importance.

They were making new friends; getting fashionable clothes; consulting which was the best shop and which were the best places; going to theatres, cinemas, dance halls, night clubs and so on. They deceived themselves that they

were getting acquainted with and accustomed to English life. That was their chief consideration and every other thing was of secondary importances. If that was the real English life, then the Englishman must be very miserable.

Some faces appeared good and I thought they might be able to help me. I explained my condition and future intentions. When they came to know about my poverty they melted like snow. I did not want any money but I wanted other kinds of help because they knew so many people and so much about the place. Every one seemed to avoid me. I suppose a word was passed about my condition. There was no place for such as myself in so distinguished a society. A few wanted to be friends, but I did not, because I did not like them. They would have got everything done free for me. All that they wanted was that I should buy through them what they called good clothes and go with them to a few of the places. Of course I must treat them to everything, when they accompanied me, because they were sacrificing their very valuable time. I told them that I was without funds and there was an end to the whole thing.

I felt very lonely, I must do what I wanted to do without anybody's help because I knew no-one. I was just like the man from the moon.

I wanted to be if possible an articled clerk in some solicitor's office. Read some advertisements in the papers and wrote to a few of them; if they would have an Indian as an Articled clerk, stating my qualifications. The premiums were too high in most of the cases. One or two of them who had small offices in the suburbs were prepared to have me for a moderate premium. Even that moderate amount was two hundred pounds; part of which was returnable after three years as weekly pay.

I decided to get articled with a solicitor in Peckham Rye. I told him that I was very poor; but he said that it was the minimum he was going to charge and the amount must be paid within two months' time. I agreed to his conditions; because there was no way out of it and paid fifty pounds as first instalment. But later I found that I had no means to pay the remainder within the limited time. I knew quite well that it was impossible for uncle Bharat to arrange that amount. I was not only hopeful but sure of obtaining the amount from one source. It was a near relative of mine, who was very rich, and who had said at one time that if I wanted money for further education he would be able to give me, but not a penny for going to England. I thought he had made that statement in order to dissuade me from going.

to England but he would help me, if I stood in need. He had no son and I was a near relative. So I wrote to him by the airmail.

In the mean-while I had to make arrangements to move to Peckham Rye. Luckily a room-mate of mine had advertised for a family in the suburbs who would have an Indian student. He received some letters from Peckham Rye as well. He did not like the area. He knew that it would be too expensive for me to go daily from Cromwell Road. It would take too much of my time and the hostel itself was expensive for me. He gave me those letters and told me if any of those houses suited me I should stay there. I was rather anxious to shift as early as possible. After reading the letters first I decided to go to the house which I thought best and the cheapest. I liked the very first of my choice and did not bother to visit the rest.

My first impression at that time was that it was really a very nice place, but later on I had to modify my opinion. Considering the amount which was thirty shillings a week for partial board, the house was quite good. It had eight rooms. Three were occupied by the land-lady, her mother and her daughter, the other three consisted of drawing room, dining room and kitchen, and the remaining two were

for the paying guest...

In a few day's time I got used to the surroundings. The land-lady was really a good natured and kind-hearted woman. She used to take a real motherly interest in her boarders. It was not for the sake of money. I think the reason was that after her husband's death the two boarders who stayed with her one after the other stayed for quite a good number of years. They had become part and parcel of the family. The first was an Irish boy who had joined the Bar and stayed with them for nearly four years. The other was a Swede who had joined the City and Guilds Institute and stayed with them for six and a half years. I was his successor. She thought I would be staying for quite a long time and I also thought the same.

But my expectations were quite wrong. I got orders from my office to move to the branch office in Clapton. I thought the arrangement was temporary and used to go every morning to the office. The distance being quite considerable, I could never be in time. I was told that the transfer was for quite a considerable time and under the circumstances it would be impossible for me to live in Pickham Rye. My landlady came to know about this and realised my position very well.

She said, "You should not worry. I know the owner of a boarding house for young people just near your office. I will speak to her personally and get you fixed up. She never had foreigners before, but now you are no more a foreigner as far as I am concerned, I will tell her everything and she should have no objection. If she refuses, I know others and they will be glad to have you."

"Please do not bother. I think I shall be able to find some place."

"No bother, besides I havenot seen my friend since a long time and this would be a good excuse for seeing her."

"Really you have been kind and you should not take so much trouble"

"Do not talk rot. I do my bit and I want others to do theirs. Norah has laid the table. It is getting late and the dinner is getting cold. Let us go and have our dinner."

We had our dinner and afterwards we came into the drawing room. We talked at random on all sorts of subjects. The landlady wanted to clean the dishes and she excused herself saying that she should get things ready for the morning. A few minutes later, Norah's fiance arrived and we had a bit of music. He was an amateur musician, though his real profession

was that of a draughtsman. The old grandma also went out of the room saying that she was feeling sleepy. Under the circumstances, I thought it best to leave the two lovers alone in order to be able to get up early in the morning and try to be in time at the office, if possible. Of course as far as manners go, they were persistent that I should not go to bed so early, as I was to leave their house in a very short time. Besides they did not like the idea of being left alone, or was it that I did not like their music? I assured them that it was nothing of the kind and their company was most enjoyable, but I was sleepy and I must go to bed. They appeared reluctant but said that if I must, I must and nothing could be said beyond that.

They were jolly well glad to get rid of me. At that time, I was reminded of a slang but patent English phrase that two is company and three is crowd. I hated all these show formalities. Their outward behaviour showed that should leave them as early as possible. The only meaning of their words was that they would be offended if I leave them. Sometimes, these formalities put people in a very awkward position. These etiquettes at times are unbearable. A poor fool who tries to please all becomes a bore and most hateful creature.

I tried to sleep but I could not for a long time. My brain coulded with all sorts of rambling thoughts. There was the landly, frank, determined, clean, loving and of open-hearted nature. She did her bit for every body as she used to say. The way in which she used to look after me was not for the sake of money, but just for the love of it. She used to clean all my dirty linen in order to save the laundry bill and used to keep cheap cigarettes in the house for my guests, because she said I must not spend any money on tobacco, when I did not smoke. Then there was the old lady, irritable, quiet, moody, wanted to be very well looked after and disinterested in the general trend of happenings and life in general. She recieved a pension and had a little fortune of her own. She knew very well that if the family did not look after her, somebody else would.

The first impressions anyone would get of Norah were those of an ordinary type of working girls which one sees tramping the streets of London every morning and evening, and even after a careful examination, such was the case. As I was living with them, it would be better to say something about her as well. There was nothing remarkable about her—no ambition, and she took life as it came without any murmur. She had a round face, which though not very

attractive was not repulsive. Her protruded chin and long nose remained me of the Punch cartoon. The thin lips drawn backwards were smeared with sex all over. The light green eyes, plucked eyebrows and a big tuft of blonde hair made her appearance from a distance quite attractive. She knew how to dress and her makeup was quite good. All was well so long she did not open her mouth. Once she spoke you would know she was quite stupid. She was of a very weak nature. Thought she was in no way responsible to the man she was engaged to so long, as she was not married to him. Her definition of morality was of an honourable contract between two parties of opposite sexes concerning the physical relations between them; and the contract did not come into force so long as the parties had not undergone all the formalities.

Her lover was somewhat interesting. He had obtained his degree in Engineering from the City and Guilds Institute and was proud of his academic qualifications. He used to boast about the marvellous time he had during the university life. The man, with a long face and a big bulging forehead, had a stupid look about him, but he was not so much of an idiot as he appeared to be. He knew pretty well how to get along in this world and how to achieve his

purpose. Long big yellow teeth in the upper jaw and narrow eyes gave him a hideous look whenever he smiled or laughed. There was something dowdy and sinister about him. He was of a tall and plumpy stature. The curved and hanging lobes showed that he was conceited self-centred and spiteful. A red bulge in the lower portion of the right eye, was also a sign of dishonesty, but with all this, there was some attraction about the man. He knew how to behave and get round people. If he was after something, he would get it in the end. It did not matter how he got it and what would be the results and consequences. He knew very well that his beloved was infatuated with the Swede, but he knew this also quite well that in the end he would succeed.

She was very much after the Swede, but from the description it appeared that he was a gay sort of a fellow who liked playing around and did not care what happened to the girl who was after him. Such was the collection of people I had lived with for some time.

CHAPTER X

I began to think about myself and my first impression of real western life, because I had seen a caricature of it in India. Had seen it from a distance. Here I was actually in the midst of it. It was very difficult for the Indian mind to comprehend certain things which were natural and ordinary for the Western mind such as, men and women walking arm in arm not only in pairs but sometimes in groups and clinging very closely to one another. Though I had seen these things before, I had never taken any particular notice of them. There it was a common sight. The predominant thought in my mind was if it could be possible to behave in such a fashion without any bad influences upon the mind. First I thought that it was not possible. Every time when the girls tried to cling to me when we went for a walk or to the pictures, I was in an uncomfortable position. Whenever Norah tried to pull me

out of the chair to teach me dancing, I felt very much embarrassed. I thought the same ought to be the state of mind of others as well, but I found out that I was entirely mistaken. Free mixing of sexes in all its stages and in all the walks of life has removed a good bit of the feeling of sex-by sex I mean the fleshy side of it-and the development of that sense of honour among men and women has raised the society to a somewhat higher level.

Lost in such a type of brown study, I do not know when I fell asleep, because I imagined that the trend of my thoughts continued in my dreams as well.

Next day, my landlady went to her friend the owner of the boarding house in Clapton. She got me fixed up there. I came to know that at first she was reluctant, but later on she said that she must have some foreigners as well and she was going to start with an Indian. The amount agreed was also quite moderate because thirty shillings was the cheapest which she had ever charged. The place was quite big because she had nearly fifteen boarders, besides her own family had occupied the basement and some rooms on the ground floor. It was very well situated being very near to the buses, trains and the underground and was only a few doors from my office. The view was lovely.

Behind were a garden and the tennis courts; in front were the Downs extending over quite a big area. The place was not on the thoroughfare and was therefore, a bit removed from all sorts of immediate noises and this gave it a quiet and dignified appearance.

By that time I was somewhat used to the English life. It did not take me long to get used to the surroundings and know the inmates of the house. Besides meals the best time to know them was after dinner into the drawing room. This part of London was not invaded by Indians. There might have been half a dozen living here and there, but it was not a common sight as in other parts of the city. My fellow boarders had seen many Indians but never had the opportunity of talking to one. They had very curious ideas about us even in this so called advanced age and in such a progressive country like England. Some thought us to be black savages, who ought to be kept under control by means of whip and that our rulers were a God-sent opportunity for us. They were doing us an unimaginable amount of good. They were educating us and making us civilised human beings fit to live in the world of to-day. They had built roads and railways; constructed bridges and canals had linked the whole country by means of telegraph, telephone and the wire-

less. Horrid things like the famine and the plague were things of the past. They were taxing their own people and spending money on us. They had sent their armies to guard us from the foreigners and their men were being murdered daily by those cut-throat Afgans and ugly Chinese. They were sending the cream of their country to put our house in order and govern us well. They were doing all this due to their goodness of heart and that holy, solemn, high and moral duty of up-lifting the humanity as a whole; and they had decided to begin this with India. Others who had higher education and imagined themselves knowing everything had a some-what superfluous knowledge about the country. They were following the press quite closely and were fond of repeating the newspaper stunts with dignity. It was interesting to hear them speak about different races, different civilisations, dangerous revolutionaries, base politicians and a variety of other topics. Their talk was not limited to India but they spoke of the world as a whole. The heated discussions which sometimes used to follow gave one the impression that these were the only persons who were the sole arbiters of the world's fate.

Two members of the labouring class also used to board with us. They were very quiet.

Took their meals on a separate table and seldom visited the drawing room. Whenever they were there they felt out of place, as soon as the others of the company bumped into it. They liked their own club and the pub better. Of course their ideas were different, and sometimes diametrically opposite, which were gathered from those labour orators. Whenever they found me alone they told me not to mind what these silly idiots talked about my country, because they knew very well that all they were saying about it was bosh and sheer nonsense. They knew everything about india.

The persons who had been to India had explained to them everything in full detail. It consisted of fellow-workers just as in England and these bloated capitalists were sucking the blood of the people there, as they were sucking it here. All the sympathy and good wishes were with me and they went so far as to suggest if I did not like the company in the boarding house I could accompany them to their club and the pub and that they were quite cheap. I thanked them for their kind offer and promised to go with them some day.

One evening when I was alone in the drawing room a young lady boarder of about twenty six came in and said that she had some confession to make. She had been trying to

catch me alone during the last few days but was unable to do so. That evening others had gone to a dance and she found it to be the most opportune time to tell me the whole story and relieve herself of a burden from her conscience.

"But why pick me of all the persons here to tell the story?"

"Because it concerns you. It is like this. Our manageress here told us one evening that every one in these days should be of a liberal mind as the world was changing. She herself was very liberal minded and wanted her guests to be so. She was going to have an Indian into the house and said that if anyone had any objections he or she should let her know beforehand. No one had any objections and I too did not have any; but when she said that she was going to put you on my table I got very furious and told her off. I told her plainly that I was not going to have any savage on my table eating with his dirty hands and creating a filthy mess. It was enough that she was going to have him in the house. I was the only one who had a table for two with a vacant place. She asked me to squeeze myself into one of the bigger tables and decided to give that small table all to yourself. I told her that I was

prepared to do that much, because we ought to be somewhat liberal.

"First when I saw you I was wonder-struck. The way in which you talked and behaved was just like us and even better than some of us. The next thing was your quite a normal fashion with knives and forks. All this was beyond me. I could not imagine Indians in such a role. I had seen them on the films talking and behaving in quite a funny fashion. Now my opinions are quite changed. The more I know about you the more I like you. You are a hand-some race of brown people highly cultured and very well polished. I thought it better to tell you that I felt sorry for my behaviour."

"Oh! that is alright and you were perfectly right when your ideas were such."

"Since then I have been reading books on Hindu philosophy and culture and I would like to ask you certain questions."

That evening I was not in a philosophic and cultural mood; and besides my knowledge on the subjects was very limited. I told her that I was a gay type of a fellow and did not know anything about it. I found that I was liked by every one; because I listened to all of them and never gave my opinion.

Here I was particularly struck with the idea how people are apt to form their opinions about nations by knowing a few individuals. Aimlessly we talked on various subjects without coming to any conclusions. When it was getting late we decided to go to bed, because the party gone out for dancing would not be returning till the early hours of the morning. The girl that evening particularly seemed very pleased with herself having taken a load off her mind.

My fellow boarders belonged to different walks of life. The two labourers were middle aged with strong and sturdy appearance. Each of them represented the typical Cockney labourer with a round face, red nose and the tawny skin due to the over exposure to the weather. The only thing which they liked was beer and their own company. They did not care about their dress. The idea always howering in their minds was that the cursed capitalists were keeping them down and out, and getting fat and rich on their labour. If you asked them the definition of the capitalists, they knew not what to say. Two things were very curious about them. One was their friendship. I was told that they had never heard any bad word passing between them. They never made any difference between

their belongings and when one was in difficulty the other helped him. The second one was their remaining single between the ages of thirty five to forty, and remaining away from their own class which is rare among labourers. There was something of will and determination about these fellows. If such people are convinced that a certain course is right and proper, they will follow it to the bitterest end. Such a type is very useful when some one knows to handle them.

Three of them were School teachers, two males and one female. The girl was about whom I have already mentioned. She was a perfect type of a School mistress; red and plumpy, took a child-like interest in each and every subject, explained things to every person in such a fashion as though he or she were a child, and thought that she followed every-thing to its farthest limit; but the truth was that she always arrived at wrong conclusions. Good round face, with nothing remarkable about her features, showed that she was an honest type of person and would have made a very good house-wife for sturdy and straightforward sort of a person. The two males were a discontented sort of fellows. I do not think they took much interest in teaching. To them it was an irksome burden and as soon they were out of

school they thought they had done something very great. They never looked further than their noses. Their own troubles, worries and cares were enough for them. They thought that they were fighting this evil world with great courage and dexterity. They wanted to get married as early as possible and settle down as good homely people. Such people can never do any thing in life.

There was an old Doctor who was leading a sort of retired life because he was not a regular practitioner. He took a philosophic attitude towards life and never bothered what was happening all around. If somebody was suffering he would help him. The only times when people saw him was at meals, otherwise he used to shut himself up in his own room and read books. The three girls whose rooms were just near mine were gay type of creatures. Two of them were shop assistants and one a typist. All of them were very young, cheerful and full of life. Their only bother was for to-day and they never cared for to-morrow. The happy faces showed that life after all had its own joys. The remaining four boarders had occupied rooms on the top floor. Two of them were students of some sort and the third a young boy was an articled clerk in a firm of Chartered Secretaries. These were poor type

of students with sober clean and industrious habits. The last member of this group was an elderly lady with some annuity spending the last days of her life in peace and comfort.

I did not find any difficulty to get along with these people. I tried to please all of them and they were very nice to me. There was something honest and good about these people. If they knew that they were not hurting your feelings and you did not mind, they were not afraid to give their candid opinion on any subject. Here everything went on quite smoothly

CHAPTER XI

For a few weeks I was not bothered about life. When the two months were over I received a gentle reminder from my office asking me to pay the premium. I told them that I had not received any reply from that rich relative of mine and as soon as I heard anything I would let them know. In a few days time, the inevitable reply came that he was not going to help me even to the extent of a single farthing. I informed my office accordingly and told them that under the circumstances it was impossible for me to carry on any longer. The head of our firm called me and said. 'I am sorry you have to leave our office under such circumstances. We are going to deduct ten pounds for the charges which we have incurred on account of you and give you the remaining forty. If ever you are in a position to join our firm we would be glad to have you back, if there be a vacancy.'

I thanked the old gentleman and returned to my lodgings to consider what I should do next. On my way back I felt giddy and helpless. Everything seemed dark and I like a lonely creature fighting this strange and tiresome world. There was no one whom I could call my own. Who would help me in this strange land? There was not even a single Indian whom I could call my friend because I knew nobody. Getting out of the bus was a troublesome and tedious task. The pavement was very slippery and it was impossible to look even a few feet in front of you due to one of those thick black fogs which are typically termed as the peasoupers. It was with great difficulty that I reached my place and I was jolly well glad to get back in warm and cosy surroundings. Seeing me with a long drawn face the inmates asked what was the matter, but I told them that I was not feeling well and retired quietly to my room. I wanted to think but I could not think any longer.

I was seized by the idea why should not I try one of the competitive examinations? If successful all my troubles and worries would be over. At that juncture I was hampered with conscientious considerations. Was not I going to do something? To do what, I did not know and still I do not know. Perhaps it is a hazy

idea still in its embryo or it might be a concrete one, but what is the good of telling it to the world. If I wanted to be a member of the respected serving class, there were better and easier means of achieving it. That was never the aim of my life. Seeing every one around me doing it, I was tempted to do it. I knew and knew it perfectly well that I was going to be a hopeless failure but still I took it. Before taking the examination the question was of choice. First I thought of the civil service, the most coveted and respected order of slaves that has ever existed on the face of this earth. Not all of them are slaves because there are masters too in that order. Most of the masters are of the superior race. If there are intelligent brains in the inferior stock, they are quieted down by being given a higher order in that well made steel frame. They are not chained by their masters; but the established order of society is such that they have to consider their friends, relations, community and what not. Then there are the products of their own efforts not limited in number by one or two but amounting to dozens who also want to live in peace and comfort. For their sakes and for sake of themselves, they have degraded themselves to such an extent that they are blind to their surroundings. Some of them try to do a little bit of good here and there but what is that before the

misery which every one knows and dare not speak about it ?

I knew that I was in no way fitted for it. Did not prepare for it. Did not know the subjects and the procedure. Even after knowing the subjects if I had attained the ordinary standard there was the question of the viva. I had not that thorough knowledge of the subjects so that even if I got twenty marks in viva I still could sweep the board. As for as the viva was concerned I was not fit enough to get even fifty. Not even the seventeenth cousin belonged, even to a lower order of slaves what to say of that respected order. All my people belonged to those stolid farmer or trader classes who never had heard that English was a language. Secondly, I was not that strong, tall weak-natured idiot, who would do what he is commanded to do. Thirdly, I did not have any hobby of playing the so-called sporty games, so that I could keep my mind off from any kind of serious thinking and never be a danger but an obedient servant. Fourthly I did not have any knowledge of the outer world, because my poor circumstances had always constrained me from moving to different places. Lastly I had that starved, stunted, thin, hungry emaciated and sickly look on my face, which showed that my end was very near. Then

what was the good of investing the hard earned capital on such a hopeless case, when all the others were a thousand times better? Even if I could attain the standard without the viva after the first and the second trial, who was there to teach me and guide; and how was it possible for me to live for such a long time, when I was not sure about my food even for next day. So even if I could get over the mental difficulty still the grapes were sour.

Instead of suffering to such an extent, it would have better to join the military, but there were some technical difficulties. I liked the idea very much. There you are not required to use your brain. Obey and you are a model soldier. You lose your individual self and the question of right and wrong does not arise. Even if you have brains they should be used towards a given end. Something out of the ordinary, then you go to the top and direct everything according to your wishes.

Next was the police, something similar but not akin to it. The examination was to take place after six months and it needed preparation. I prepared for it in the most funny fashion and stood first from the bottom. The forty pounds were not only to last me for six months but examination fees and all other expenses were to be included. Uncle Bharat

was in difficulties and it was not possible for him to send me a single penny. Solving this puzzle was really beyond my powers. But I decided to make the best out of a bad bargain. It was impossible for me to stay even in that cheap place because it was beyond my means. My first task was to find out some one poor like myself, preferably one from my own country, so that I could share the room and we could cook our own food. For this reason I started haunting the hives of my country students. If possible I wanted to spend only four pounds a month everything inclusive and have the remainder for my education.

Suddenly I fell ill. It was a strange kind of illness. Hands, feet and the eyes were swollen; the temperature was high and the whole body was burning. A dying fear caught me and I wrote to my uncle that I was ill. He requested my guardian angels to look after me and help me if possible. So they wrote me a letter asking me to go and see them. My landlady phoned them that I could not move out of my bed. So they said that they were going to send a doctor for me whose charges were very moderate but the money should be paid whenever he came to see me. The landlady who knew my actual condition said that there was already a very good doctor looking

after me and that she had taken the whole responsibility upon herself. That was all they wanted and wrote to my uncle that he should not worry any more. I recovered after a fortnight's illness, but I was very weak. At that time I received a letter from the angels asking me to see them at my earliest convenience. I was able to move, so I went to see them.

One of the angels looked at me from head to foot and then said, "you are in most delicate condition of health, I think you should go to India back as soon as possible."

"But at the present moment I can not do that."

"Well, well, I do understand your studies and so on but as soon as you recuperate, you can come back and resume your studies. A loss of few months time, say even a year, is not much. You must remember that life and health are the two most important things. It is only for these that you are doing all this. A few pound's expenditure for going and coming is not much."

"Looking at things I do not think I can go back."

"Yes, your health is very delicate. I do not mean that you should leave at once. Take some time till you are in a fit condition to

leave. I am saying all this just for your own good. The climate does not seem to suit you."

"When I am alright what is the good of going back."

"No use being obstinate. I am saying all this just for your own good. I am not asking you to make up your mind at once. Think it over and let me know. We are always ready to help you."

Poor deluded creatures, what did they know of my difficulties and even if they did they could not or would not help me. There was that question of will. I wanted to learn something and I did not want to fulfil the prophecies of all whom I had left behind. There was no question of giving way.

I was again in search of a co-boarder. All my searches at probable places were fruitless. Even the so called down-and-out were in a better position than myself. They knew the means of living quite cheerfully and cheaply by shifting from one place to another and never paying their bills, leaving their dud suitcases and making the poor woman understand that they would be coming back, taking loans from newly formed friends and never paying them back and, if worst came to worst then begging

openly from their costudents. I do not mean that all of them were of the above type. Some of them might be genuine cases but most of them were so. Their prolific appearance in these haunts gave me a creeping horror, because I was afraid that I might not be required to do the same, but I was determined not to stoop so low. I might have gone to some foreign country as an honest labourer and then built my career up, but never to practice such cheap and mean methods.

I come to know of a cook in an Indian house who belonged to my parts and I wanted to see him. He was a fat, contented, happy and homely sort of a fellow, who told me that he knew just the type of a man who would suit me perfectly. He was living in the house of a Hindu preacher who had come to England to spread the sacred Hinduism to these heathens, who needed a real religion, the philosophical understanding of that Supreme being and the ways of becoming one with Him. He was going to teach them that high Hindu Philosophy which the world acknowledges as unrivalled. This great man was going to turn the world into one sacred brotherhood where there will be no misery and vices. He had chosen England to be his first objective.

I said to myself, "God help England. He

had come to a country to preach religion which had already discarded it. Occasionally on days like Sundays there might be some old women and children, otherwise the churches were all empty. Old women went there, because they had practically nothing to do. Children, of course, were forced to go for two reasons. In the first place, though the parents no longer cared for religion, they wanted their children to follow it thinking that it was good for them. Secondly they were a nuisance at home and it was the best way to get rid of them, at least for the time being. So much has been said and written on religion in Europe that there is nothing more to say. Some of the wise ones when they find it impossible to preach Christianity in their own homes find it better to preach it, nay establish it by some indirect and cheaper methods in other parts of the world.

Why people want religion? There ought to be some guiding principle on which the future course of life should be moulded in order to better it from the existing state. If religion does not serve this principle any more now then it is as dead as dodo. Something which will put new life, new blood in their veins and raise humanity to a much higher level is needed. It does not matter what you call it, whether you dub it religion or anything else.

I thought that this great gentleman was going to fulfil this, because every mighty thing had a small beginning.

CHAPTER XII

That very evening I went to the sacred house and thought of killing two birds with one stone. My first was selfish; it was to talk to the man who was going to share the room with me and reduce my expenses and second was to see and listen to this august personality. As soon as I rang the bell the door was opened by the great man. Shaking hands in the most offensive fashion and saying that his name was such and such he welcomed me in very heartily.

First look at the man, and all my hopes were dashed to the ground. He was a stumpy little fellow with very nice moustache, well marked Indian up-country features and a big turban had adorned his little head. He had some kind of mean, greedy, selfish and unreliable look about him. Later when I came to know his history I found that I was not wrong in my judgement.

He had a little bit of his own money and

received quite a substantial help from an Indian religious institution. Not only did he want to make a name and fortune for himself, but he thought of teaching, preaching and uniting the Indians abroad. He kept his little fortune safe, only to be used in case of emergency and the society helped him generously.

He pretended to form societies and teach in different parts of Africa. He collected funds from the people there telling them that it would be used for their down-and-out brethren in other parts of the world. Some of the poor idiots who were already suffering could not bear the thought of seeing anyone in a worse condition than they actually were and gave their hard earned pennies for the supposed charitable fund.

A big show, giving of parties, exchange of beautiful words-and off went the bearer of good news to Trinidad. Again there was the same game to play with the Hindus of the place. He formed societies in different parts; collected funds and started his preaching. The people were intelligent and soon started disliking the man. When he found his position becoming unbearable, he expressed his wish of converting the Heathens and England was to be his first objective.

Some kind of put-up show by the people of his own type—and bringing all the funds with him—the man established himself in London. Of course, he was going to use the funds in England brought from these parts; besides the religious society in India gave him extra money for propaganda and other purposes. To carry on the religious preaching unhampered that man had bought a lovely little detached house in his own name by means of these different funds. For further progress of his work he would be receiving help from time to time.

In one direction he was progressing marvellously. The zeal and dexterity with which he was working showed that the fruits were note-worthy and that was in the direction of muscular exercises with his wife. He had produced five children within a limited period of six years. The children having been born in different places were a League of Nations by themselves. Goodness only knows how he was going to bring them up. That being the rate of production, even in his young age of forty-seven the number would reach to fifteen and if same were the rate of his travel, then his family would be an international problem.

The next person I can across was his wife, a sweet little woman with a good round face. She was dressed like a doll and her tommy was

bulging out in such a fashion that it seemed she was going to bring forth another creature into the world very shortly. She was of a very weak nature and was very much worried about her husband and her family. She would fight even when her husband was on the wrong side thinking it to be her duty from the Hindu point of view. She possessed that slavish aptitude of following everything without reason which is taken to be the birth right of a woman according to the modern oriental trend of thought. Though out of Purdah she was still shy and never liked the idea of coming out into the public. Her husband was so jealous, suspicious and conscious of her beauty that he suspected that poor woman of adultery and fornication at every step. He used to peep through the chinks and key holes in order to find out whether she was making love to one of the boarders or visitors.

I think, in the words of a Persian Poet, his suspicions had reached such a height that he was jealous when his own children embraced their mother with love. He was as proud as a peacock when she was beside him and used to look round whether people appreciated his possession. I think the deluded skunk had not seen any beautiful woman. The way in which he used to act showed that he suspected his

wife of infidelity and he was thoroughly miserable.

I was taken into the drawing or the worship room, whatever you might like to call it. Nearly two dozen persons had gathered there. Most of them were Indian students. One or two were the members of the sect about which he was going to preach and therefore thought it their duty to support the cause by every possible means.

Some of them were those fanatical dull heads who really believed in the great cause. They judged everything according to their own standard. The way in which they were brought up made them think that they were the top. They were those high type of vegetarians who did not touch anything, if it was brought with meat; but if anyone saw them swallowing eggs and fish they would shout with all the force of an argument, that these things were vegetables in the West because some doctor said so. At the same time they would fly at my throat if I said that they are baboons because some philosopher said so.

They were the great believers of Indian freedom. This talk about revolution, nationalism, socialism and communism was all bunk. Convert the English into Hinduism and all your

troubles and worries will be at an end. They will realise how great people you are. Will give you your freedom and become your servants. It was interesting to hear them speak of that big, "We", after having gone all that way and still being blind to everything; neither seeing the world nor caring to understand it.

Some impelled by curiosity were also to be found. Their interest in going to that place was as much as that of going to see a variety show in Soho. Gay birds had assembled too. They had gone with the idea of finding some beautiful girls and becoming friends with them, but they were very much disappointed.

The four girls were not at all of a gay temperament. They did not care much about their dress and wanted to do something unusual. Having read something, but not much about their own religion they did not find anything comforting in it. So they thought of haunting meetings of other religions; besides it was a good pastime when they had nothing to do.

The most interesting in the whole group was a shrewd old lady. She was either getting something from the Intelligence Department or she wanted to keep the neighbourhood clean and free from filthy mess. It might be that she knew something of the Vedic philosophy and

wanted to know more about it from a Hindu Pandit. Anyhow she pretended to take a great interest in the whole movement and kept a good eye on all those who assembled there. She signed her name in the register as one of the converts and made those girls to do likewise. She was quite influential in the surrounding districts, especially in the churches, because it was there she used to arrange meetings on days other than Sundays for this gentleman.

I was told that the gatherings were quite big and the discussions interesting. After four months' preaching the converts register contained nine names, three old ladies, four girls and two Indian students.

People in the drawing room had arranged themselves into different little groups. They were talking on all imaginable subjects but not religion. This was the state of affairs for nearly three quarters of an hour. Exactly at seven the gentleman appeared in his ceremonial dress. Everyone knew what to do. All the furniture in the room was heaped up in a corner. At the other end of the room a corner of the carpet was overturned and I noticed a square pit covered with a wooden board. After removing the cover some wood was put into it. The gentleman with his wife sat on one side of the pit and the old lady sat facing them. All the

others had to sit uncomfortably on the carpet. The wood was lit by means of camphor. Then some mixture containing butter, sugar and other things was put on the fire after recitations of some religious hymns. I happened to know some Sanskrit and those hymns, and to me his pronunciation and acting appeared quite funny because they were all wrong. In a few minutes time the room was filled with smoke. Nearly all of them started coughing and sneezing. It was quite interesting to see them getting red and blue in the face and the gentleman saying that their breathing of this purified air would do them an immense amount of good. After the ceremony every one was getting ready to leave.

Later I came to know that this great cause was hampered on all sides and the gentleman was forced to leave the shores of that inhospitable country. He was swindled to the extent of hundred and fifty pounds by a person through whom he bought the house. His expenses were quite heavy and the amount of help received was not sufficient. He was forced to sell the house for whatever he could get and it was bought on the hire purchase system. So the great movement which was to transform this miserable world into a union of peace and brotherhood had such an inglorious ending.

CHAPTER XIII.

At about half past eight, when everybody had left and I was about to leave, the young man, with whom I had to share the room for nearly a year, entered the house. He was tall and fair but not handsome. He was clean shaven and had greenish eyes. Though he was not more than thirty-five, grey hair and wrinkles on his face made him look quite old. Slanting forehead, raised cheek bones and teeth protruding out gave him quite a cunning, deceitful, and sinister appearance. He was not only shabbily dressed, but was clumsy in his behaviour. That was the reason that everybody wanted to avoid him and they were right in doing that. He could not be taken for an Indian, but he could not be assigned to any other country as well. I think he was a gentleman from nowhere. I was told by the owner of the house that this was Kaka the gentleman, I had been waiting for. Kaka asked me to follow him to his room.

After asking me to sit down he said, "I am rather tired and it is getting late. If there is any thing important, just let me know."

"I have been told by a friend of mine from that Indian house that you might be willing to share a room with me so that we might cook our own food and reduce the expenses to the minimum."

"Yes, that cook had already told me about you and your poor condition. Though I can afford to live in a better style, I would not mind reducing my expenses a bit. Besides taking your poor circumstances into consideration I might be prepared to do that much favour."

"I do not know how to thank you because you have taken me out of a great difficulty."

"That is a thing for the future to be seen. Let me see how we get along. If you do not suit me then you would be putting me into plenty of inconvenience at least for the time being. You better give me your name and address, and see me in two or three days' time. I will search for a suitable room and as soon as I find one I will let you know."

"Day after tomorrow I will be here at about seven in the evening."

"You also be on the lookout for a big and

cheap room. If you find one just let me know. Do not make any definite arrangements; I will accompany you and then have a talk with the landlady."

After this short conversation I returned to my lodgings. The next morning I told the owner of the boarding house that I was going to leave very shortly and live with a friend, because I wanted to reduce my expenses to the minimum. She knew everything about me and said that I could pay as much as I could afford and stay as long as I wanted to. I did not want to be under any obligation if I could help it. I thanked her for her kindness; but at the same time stated my inability to stay.

I could not find any suitable room because I never made a door to door search for it. Two days after when I went to see this newly formed acquaintance, he asked me to shift at once to our new lodgings which were near Manor House. It was a big basement room but the place was filthy. I had to mould myself according to circumstances. The house was owned by an Anglo-German family. Only one big double bed had covered most of the space in the room. It was a misnomer to call it a bed; because every part of it was broken and on the top of it the old woman asked us to share it. I was prepared to live in that

wretched condition, but I refused to share the the bed. Thinking that we might not stay she said that she could provide us with another small bed. It was an apology for a bed but still much better than the first one. Kaka expressed his wish of occupying the small one and I was left with no choice.

The Anglo-German family consisted of a German gentleman and his fat old English wife. The German, a strong and stout little fellow, with a bald head had the appearance a perfect Hun. He was proud of his descent. He was happy, honest contented and a straightforward person. He possessed a very active brain but that activity had no definite aim. He was a keen observer of that post-war hatred of the Hun by the Briton. He had seen the whole propaganda and its actual effects during, and after the war. His blood would boil, if you reminded him of those days.

Touch him on the weak point and he would bubble out, 'I would have worked wonders. I would have showed these dull-headed English what a German could do. I might have been a great German spy and, believe me, I had all the opportunities to do so. On the contrary, I a German, was an honourable member of the Scotland Yard. Was kept here during the war to keep close watch on the activities of the

foreigners and the English alike. I was a preserver of law and order. Imagine me doing that, but I did it and did it so well that I got a medal for that. I acted against my own conscience and did all this just for the love of my wife and children."

The persons whom he called dull heads were quick enough to know his weakness and trusted him completely. In his younger days he must have been a very active and useful worker for those under whom he worked; but in his old days when I saw him he was so quiet, self-centred and secluded that he did not know what was happening, what to say of his house, even outside his own room. Even in that old age he could earn four to five pounds a week. He recharged batteries and repaired wireless sets. Not only this, he used to make wireless sets and sell them quite cheap by putting them into a shop, the owner of which was his friend. Give him any set and he would make one, but ask him anything about its technicalities and he would shake his head. In his own room everything was upside down; it was an entanglement of wires, but to him it was so orderly that he could pick up at once whatever he wanted. He was happy inside it and wanted no disturbance. He was doing something all day long, but nobody knew what? He wanted plenty of

good food, beyond that he did not care for what happened.

His wife, on the other hand, was a fat old stupid woman. There was something honest about her, but she was greedy and dirty. By the way in which she used to dress and powder herself no one could ever imagine her to be so dirty. She had a very nice drawing room filled with antique furniture; but it was always locked. It was opened on occasions like the visit of her family. She had nearly half a dozen children and all of them rich, prosperous, and settled in life. Two of her sons were so rich that they had beautiful villas in the suburbs of London, with plenty of servants, cars and all the modern comforts of life. She was fond of pomp and show. She was proud of her family and she could have lived with any of her sons in comfort; but the love of her husband was too deep.

The old man did not want any help from his children. Some of them were even ashamed to see the way in which he lived, but they dare not say anything to that proud old man. He wanted to be free, independent and happy. He said that so long as he had two stout hands and an active brain, he would not live on the charity of others. If he was infirm and unable to earn anything then he had a perfect right

over any of them, because he had brought them up. Besides, why should he be a burdon upon one and not on the other? He did not like to be a nomad, neither did he want a contribution from all of them. His wife would have very much liked to live with them. She would do so if he died before her, though he might leave a little fortune which would be quite sufficient for her.

Here I could understand something of the lower middle-class English life. The post-war new-rich on whom so much has been written during recent years are a new factor in the society. They are despised by the educated and old English families; but at the same time their trying to mix with them so that they can get some money out of them is remakable. Here I could see how artificial conditions were created for the so called love-making by young people and arranging of marriages within a group of families. In order to ensure the future safety of these matrimonial contracts there was frequent mention in the wills by all rich relatives that if a particular couple were still husband and wife, there was so much to be given to them. Not only this, but direct hints were dropped to the boys and girls that such and such would be the most desirable wives or husbands for them. Their mimicking of the

middle and the upper middle classes and showing their dislike of the working classes were ridiculous.

One afternoon when I returned after attending a lecture, the German gentleman took me into the drawing room, asking me to tea and saying that he was going to show me a most interesting lady. She was a neighbour of one of his sons and her name was Mrs. Clown. She was a plumpy, red haired, weak woman. She must have been quite attractive in her younger days. She was rather notorious as far as the Indians were concerned. She was sued for a big swindling case by a famous Indian. He was a merchant prince of some sort and she was an accomplice with two other criminals in swindling him.

On certain occasions the German was very inquisitive and he asked her, "Why did you swindle the man? I was told he was fabulously rich. He liked you and he would have made you rich in no time."

"That was true but every thing was pre-arranged and I had no say in the matter. All I had to do was to act. I was badly in need of money and a nice formula of getting rich in no time was found. Later, when I got intimate and started liking the man, it was too late."

"You were in jail for three years. When you went you were quite shapely but during your stay you have increased round your waist. I suppose you liked the place very much."

"No, at first I did not. I wanted drinks, cigarettes, and a hectic time, but even my movements were restricted. I had to work for a regular number of hours and I hated everything. After a year's pining I found that there was no go. I had to be contented. There was nothing to worry about. My life was regularised and I got rid of good many of my bad habits."

"No, well, then it was all for good."

"Anyhow, I imagine myself to be a better Woman."

Kaka thoroughly disapproved and detested my behaviour. He suspected me of immorality, indecency and all the other imaginable vices. The most he disliked was my outward and inward behaviour being the same. He would not have minded if I had done anything on the quiet. Then I would have been a good man in his eyes. His verbal definition of morality and character was just the same as given by everybody, but the practical application to individuals was different. In the eyes of the world you are a good man so long as the general public does not know that you are a

thorough scoundrel. What an idea and what a convenient definition, people having a certain bent of mind make their own definitions, but they are not logical, considering mankind as a whole.

One or two lectures in the College; and all my time was spent at home. I was preparing for the forthcoming competitive police examination. Most of the burden of preparing the meals and washing the plates fell on me. I dare not grumble. Kaka did the buying and I must do the cooking. Buying was a profitable thing in two ways because it saved time and money.

Once seeing me reluctant he said, "With you I am as fair as I could be. You must understand that I have to attend the college from morning till evening; after that I have to study for my examinations, which are every three months. I would like to spend as little as possible, but at the same time I would like to pass my examinations as well. I can afford to spend more, if need be and be free from all this trouble and botheration. I am doing all this because you are in such a pitiable condition and I have taken mercy on you."

I dare not utter a single word because my circumstances were such that all I could do

was to suffer in silence. I imagined that if he left me I would be in hopeless condition. There was no place for me to go to under such cheap conditions. Though the place was the most filthy one, which I could imagine at that time. The bed was like an undulating hill, reminding me of the sierras of Spain, and full of bugs. Sheets were seldom changed. The place was reeking with bad smell. What to say of having a carpet, there was not even a broken piece of linoleum on the floor. The room was damp from all sides, even at the top. In the musty and dirty hole I felt worse than a pig.

The only thing we had for meals was potato curry and thick crude type of Indian bread. Sometimes even that was not available. One evening when I was making the potato curry on the coals in the fire place, down came a ball of soot from the chimney. It not only filled the saucepan and made me look like a chimney-sweep; but it also converted the room into his store.

During these days I was so thin, starved and weak that fainting was a common occurrence. In order to save a penny or two I used to walk a good bit of distance while attending my lectures. The only thing which gave me all the peace of mind was honesty and acting according to the dictates of my conscience.

My only pastime or amusement was sitting in the park watching people. In the end I appeared for the competitive police examination with the inevitable results, as already mentioned that I stood first from the bottom.

After this I was of an unsettled mind for quite a long time. Often I used to visit the cook with whom I became quite friendly. I liked him very much. There was something good about the man. I think he was liked by most of the visitors.

A good many times I used to walk in the northern poor quarters of London. One evening I saw in the shopping area that a great reduction sale was going on in a shop which dealt mostly in clocks, watches and fancy goods. I entered the shop with future intentions of buying and asking the man whethet that nice little watch reduced to five shillings was really good. A thoughtless action, that man would have undoubtedly said that it was marvellous. As soon as I pointed at the thing he took it out. Before I could ask any questions he threw it with a jerk on the ground and said that it wouldn't stop even, if it fell from a great height. When I said that I just wanted to know the make and ask if it was a good watch, he was red and blue in the face and wanted to give me an unforgettable blow. He jumped

over the counter, but before he could reach me I was out of the shop and started running. He followed me for a few steps and then returned.

At that time I thought discretion was the better part of valour. I do not know why I ran, but I was sorry for myself and I cried. I could not understand the reason of his behaviour. I bumped into an Indian sailor and every thing was clear. The place was a frequent rendezvous of Indian sailors, dock labourers, pedlars, hawkers, criminals and the like. They have a haggling mind. For them going to London is of as much importance as going to Colombo or Singapore. They enter the North East and East End shops just to haggle when they have nothing to do. Sometime when they do want to buy they ask such questions, 'How long will it last? Will it break?' and so on.

This particular shop-keeper must have been in the habit of undergoing all sorts of experience through the hands of these people. A good many times he must have been irritated and teased to the limit by them, but he was powerless because they were stout and fierce. He thought that I would buy the watch, and demonstrated all the good qualities before I could ask any questions. When I told him that I just wanted to know whether it was a good make, he wanted to take a good revenge

and thought me to be a weak offspring of a tribe who would not be able to resist.

I returned to my room, took out five shillings and went back to the shop. My main object was to find out the motive of the man. I knew perfectly well that the watch was worthless. When I entered the shop the man was perfectly calm and collected. I asked for the watch. He gave it to me in a most polite fashion. As I left the shop his remark was, "I was mistaken, I suppose you are a student." I was right in my analysis. The only use for the watch was to throw it into a wastepaper basket.

CHAPTER XIV.

One evening Kaka accompanied me to the house of the Cook my friend. We had a hearty meal at his place. I indulged in a frivolous conversation with his wife. I rather enjoyed talking to her, because she spoke the same dialect as myself and I felt homely, just like talking to my own sister or aunt. Her little daughter woke up and wanted to play. So we played hide and seek into the room.

The cook asked Kaka, "Why are you living in that dirty hole? Why not you take a furnished modern self-contained flat and live in a better style?"

"We would very much like to, but it is not possible to manage with the amount which we are spending."

"I have thought about that too. It could easily be managed."

"How?"

"I have a boarder who is paying three guineas a week. Those are our cheapest rates. He wants to pay something less say two pounds ten; but at the same time he must have pure vegetarian food and all other comforts. He feels out of place in a non-student institution. He is appearing for the Civil Service, therefore has no time to go in search of a house. He has asked me if I could do anything for him. I have already told him that I know two other boys, who might be prepared to live with him. As he has no time he would not be doing anything. The buying, paying of bills and all other management will be done by his room mates. All he would be required to do is to give them two pounds ten. Their expenses per head might be less, but they would be taking this extra trouble."

"And what did he say?"

"He said that he would be jolly well glad to join you. He is of your community. Therefore you two should get on fine."

"In that case I will consider the matter and let you know in a day or two."

"Do not talk rot. There is nothing to consider. The whole expression upon your face shows that you would jump at the chance."

No use posing and talking all sorts of hotch-potch."

"You misunderstanding me. I was....."

"No. I understand you perfectly. You thought of talking it over with Ganesh and impose your own terms. Well, you are not going to do that."

"Just listen to what I have to say and then you would know as to what I was driving at."

"Now, you listen to me. I have already arranged a cosy little furnished flat for twenty five shillings. It is beautifully clean. One of my Scotch maids here has an elderly cousin. This lady is very adaptable and good. I will teach the old woman how to prepare Indian food. She will cook, clean the rooms, supply you with hot water for your baths. She will do the shopping as well and bring you the bills. All you would be required to do is to pay the bills and keep a kind of general account just for your own guidance. But I am going to do all this just on one condition. It is that, Ganesh will pay five pounds a month and not a penny more. I don't think your expenses will be more than that but if they are, then you will have to pay from your own pocket."

"You got me all wrong Mr. Bhola. I live with Ganesh. Don't I know how he is eking

out his existence by trying to save a penny here and a penny there. I like him and I would like to help him."

"Whatever may be your intentions. Now everything is clear. I like the boy. He almost looks like dead and I want him to live. I was thinking to do something for him and I have sketched this plan. If you like you can shift tomorrow. There are all the comforts and nothing to worry about."

While we were leaving, Bhola remained me not to speak about this arrangement and leave aside for the time being that honesty and equality stuff, if I wanted to live; because to his mind everything was fair from a business point of view. We did shift on the following day, though we had paid a week's rent in advance. In this new flat I had a room to myself. There was nothing to worry about. I was very well looked after. Only in a few days time I really did feel alive and wondered at the change. The place being in the suburbs; there were plenty of open spaces. Daily I used to go for a walk and I recuperated in no time.

I joined the King's College with the intentions of obtaining a degree in law. I was told that it was the most difficult degree of the University; but I said to myself, 'If I get a

degree it must be really worth something'. By that time I was quite used to London life and did not feel a stranger in the place. The only thing which was troubling me was my pecuniary future uncertainty. I was not sure even of getting five pounds a month from home, knowing full well that uncle Bharata was in debt. Besides, I knew perfectly well that this new arrangement was only temporary and again I will have to find a way out independently. Another new factor was Bhola. I felt particularly drawn towards him and I knew that so long as he was in London he would help me.

This new partner who had joined us was a round-faced plumpy simpleton. He would be prepared to do anything so long as he was kept in comfort. He was slow in thinking; but once if he was convinced that such and such a thing was to his advantage he would act at once. He knew how to get round people and achieve his own ends. He would stoop to anything so long as there was some material and selfish advantage.

I became a frequent visitor of the Indian house and knew practically all the inmates of it. There I met famous poets and writers, public men and mill-owners, Rajas and millionaires; and a variety of all sorts of people; but the most interesting of them all were two

young students. They affected the future course of my life to a great extent.

Both of them were quite young, one a few months older and the other a few months younger than me. All of us belonged to that transitory age of twentyone, when one is supposed to pass the boyhood and enter youth. One evening when they came to the Indian house I was sitting in my new suit in the drawing room. As soon as they entered I looked round and they asked me where the Manager was. I told them that he lived at the other end of London. It would take them nearly an hour and a half to reach his place. Besides, he seldom visited this place. I said that if there was anything I could do for them I would be too pleased to do it.

The elder one said, "Oh, it is nothing important. We had a letter of introduction, so that he might help us if we were in need of anything. It was given by one of his closest friends. Now it does not matter, we are not going to go all that way and take unnecessary trouble. We have dozens of other introduction letters to bigger and better people. I do not think that we would require any help and even if we are in need of it I am sure these letters would not serve any useful purpose."

"Please do sit down, if you are not in a hurry."

"Thank you, we are not in a hurry. On the contrary, if not a nice treat, we came with the intentions of at least having a free tea, but now it seems that we will have to have it at the Lyons."

"Of course you will have tea with me, but I do not promise all the good things which you could have at Lyons."

"We are prepared to have tea with you only on one condition, that if there is anything to be paid, we will pay and you will have tea with us."

"What an idea? Just now you wanted free tea and now you have made up your mind even to pay for a third person as well. If you think you have secured a point over me, you are entirely mistaken. If I was a guest here, I would have been required to pay for the things I ordered, but I am just a visitor like you."

"In that case there is a greater reason that you will have to pay, because I do not see any guest who will treat all the three of us."

"Do not jump to conclusions. It is a fact that whenever I have anything here I pay for it, but Bhola the cook here is my friend. Sometimes when I am with his family in his room

and have anything I am not required to pay for that. Today as a special case he is going to treat all of us here. He has a perfect right to do so and my friends are his friends."

I called Bhola up and told him everything. He smiled and said that he was not only going to give us a nice tea but prepare one or two of his specialities, because all of us were his guests that afternoon. He went down to prepare those specialities of his and order the maids to lay the table for us.

As soon as Bhola had gone down the elder one said, "I like your presumption. You have hardly known us even for a few minutes and you have announced us as your friends, but never mind. I think it is time that we should introduce ourselves. As you have called us friends without knowing even our names, we will let you know our nicknames. I am called Banu and my younger friend Kishore, and we are from the Punjab."

"I am called Ganesh and I am from India. I have lived in different parts and therefore can not assign myself to any one place."

"Since how long have you been living in London?"

"More than a year."

"In that case I am going to take your

advice. We are living in the house of an M. P. and paying seven guineas per week individually for our partial board. Our other expenses come to another five and I think the expenses are too heavy. If that be the rate of our expenditure I do not think we shall be able to pull on for long. We are in search of a cheaper and better place. We have already seen two or three and we would like you to accompany us and see them, or if you know any others, to tell us about them."

"I do not know any, because I never search for them; but I will accompany you and give my opinion as to one which will be most suitable for you."

"When will you accompany us?"

"If you like, this very evening; because I have nothing to do in particular. I am stunned and horrified to know the rate of your expenditure. Even if you are paying that M. P. such an exorbitant amount, in the hope of a future gain, he will fleece you to the farthest possible limit before you can get anything out of him. The sooner you leave that place the better it is. There are all sorts of people and you have to be very careful. You should try to reduce your expenses to the minimum. Remember it's the hard-earned money of your parents."

While I was sermonising with a posing attitude, the maids brought the tea for us. Bhola came not with one or two, but half a dozen of his specialities. We wanted him to join us, but he excused himself saying that he had some important things to attend to. I knew perfectly well that he wanted to leave us alone. We would have been formal if he was present; but in his absence we were quite familiar and homely.

Kishore all this time was quiet as though he were dumb; but his smiling mischievous eyes were fixed on me in such a fashion that he did not like a word of what I said. At last he asked me to stop this nonsense of preaching and sermonising and talk something frivolous. Then we talked of all the mischief and fun we used to have during our school days and enjoyed this very much. After this he was quite talkative and cheerful. There was something attractive about his round, large, joyous, and intelligent eyes; but he was quite dull. Later, when I came to know more of him, not only did I like but I became fond of him. He had quite a big heart; but being weak and lazy, was led into a wrong direction. He imagined himself to be quite handsome and was very particular about his dress. He liked moving there in the highest circle of Indian society; because he

was also a member, if not of the highest, then of the nearest to it.

Banu on the other hand had a very practical and sensible mind. He was morally very loose and there were other weaknesses too in his character. There was one very remarkable thing about him. If he regarded you as one of his friends, then he was quite fair in his dealings and would be prepared to do anything for you.

Whatever may be the cause I liked both of them very much. Kishore felt so much drawn towards me that his eyes would always say, "Whatever may be my weakness, we are always going to be friends."

After tea I accompanied them to the Kensington area to see those three places. There was no difficulty in seeing them, because they were quite near to one another. The place I liked best was also their choice. They gave something in advance and gave a week's notice at the place where they were living. When they had shifted, they invited me for dinner and after that our mutual visits were very frequent. Bhola must have told them everything about my poor condition, because whenever I went to see them they would stuff a florin or half a crown in my pocket saying that as I was late on their account I should take a taxi or some such thing.

CHAPTER XV

It was the first case of my friend-ship. I did not feel any kind of inequality with them. There were no secrets between us. Practically all my week-ends were spent there. We used to fight, try our strength, snatch each others things and play all sorts of mischief. Bholā enjoyed and encouraged all this because he was glad to see me live cheerfully.

Both of them knew that my temperament, behaviour, character and station in life were just opposite to theirs; but still they liked me. The depth of their liking can be seen from one instance. One evening they rang me and asked me to accompany them to Paris by the night train. I told them not to talk stupid, because I did not have enough cash even to go to Brighton. Besides I did not possess a decent pair of pyjamas or a dressing gown. They told me not to talk silly. They were taking me and had made all the arrangements. I would not be re-

quired to spend a penny, but have a free two week's excursion to Paris during the holidays. After that they would deposit me back safe and sound in London. I should take whatever I had. If my pyjamas were not good enough they would buy me a nice silk pair there. They were so sure of my going that they had already bought the tickets.

I went to consult Bhola and he insisted that I should go and see something worth seeing. He gave me three pounds only to be used in emergency and told me to inform him at once, if we were in any kind of difficulty or wanted any help from him. I was very much excited because I was going to a wonderful place and would not be required to spend a single penny.

In Paris we occupied a beautiful suite of rooms in a decent English-speaking hotel near Hotel Maurice in Champs-E'lys'ees. We had taken hundred and fifty pounds, which we thought would be more than sufficient for our two weeks' stay. It was really a thrill to stay in a place where none of us could understand a single word of the language spoken. The difficulty was not only concerning the language; but we were in quite unfamiliar and strange surroundings. As far as I was concerned all my experience was a little adventure by itself.

My friends were a bit of gay birds. They did not like seeing anything during the day. For them day was night and night day. To a great extent I had to do what they did. The night life of Paris was our chief objective. It being the New Year's time Paris was at the zenith of its gaiety. Streets and all the places of amusement during the night were filled with faces beaming with happiness. Men were shouting some familiar and happy slogans and women were throwing kisses at strangers.

The first thing we saw was Casino-de-Paris. My friends had heard so much about Josephine Baker that they wanted to have a good look at her. We booked the front-row seats and reached the place at the exact time. The setting, general effects, and the whole arrangement of the French stage was so wonderful, that I have never seen the like of it anywhere else. I was so much fascinated by the whole show that I waited anxiously for the next variety turn. The interval was of about forty minutes and we decided to have some refreshment outside.

In the gangway we were accosted by a stout fellow in a musty evening suit. He spoke perfect English and asked us whether we were from London. Kishore did not take any notice of him and I did not want to talk to anybody. The only thing I wanted was to see the other half

of the show. Banu on the other hand thought that he might have seen him in London. It would not be a bad idea to talk to him and spend some of time of our long interval, because the refreshment would not take us more than few minutes. After a short introduction the man said that his son was a big boxer in London. He himself was in some kind of business and he had come to enjoy like us. He knew French perfectly well and seeing us strangers wanted to give us a piece of advice,—that we should be careful, because the place was full of crooks, thieves and all sorts of cheap and mean persons. If we wanted fun and some enjoyment on the quiet, he would take us to a house where the charges were quite moderate and it was a good and reputable place. It was by accident that he came to know about this place through a French friend of his.

The interval was too long and he himself felt like going there. His private car was standing outside. If we liked we could accompany him and no one even would know about our movements. As though somebody was watching us: but my friends actually imagined that somebody was and it was possible that he might inform their parents. He also said that if we did not like the place we need not pay a single franc, because the owner of the place

knew him well. There was no question of missing the show, because he promised to bring us back before time. He himself liked the show very much and was not going to miss it. He wanted to spend a few of his dull minutes there and it was very near.

First Kishore was on my side and did not want to leave the place. He was also very much interested in the show and said that there was hardly any time to go to such places. In the end Banu persuaded him to go, saying that there was no harm and if we really liked the place, we might go there some other time. He took a gentleman's word from that stranger that we were going under his protection and everything was to be fair and square. If we did not like the place, we would not pay a single cent and if asked for something, we would say that we did not know anything and that we were brought there by him. He gave his word and said that every thing would be according to our wishes.

Still I did not want to go and I told Banu in Hindi that in the first place it was bad to go to such places. Secondly, it was sheer folly to go with a complete stranger in his private car and that such dangerous experiments were always harmful and never good.

On this Banu was very angry and said in a contemptuous tone in Hindi, "My little careful careworn, you see danger at every step. I have never before seen a coward like you. I suppose you have read those stories where people are taken into strange cars and robbed not only of their last farthing but are left practically naked shivering on the roadside. Remember we are three. What can he do to us? Have some courage, you fool. However it does not matter if you do not come. We will see you before the show begins. Let me remind you that you will be sorry for what you will miss."

There was no choice for me but to accompany them. The stranger was quite pleased with the result of his efforts. I am sure everyone of us knew perfectly well that he was an agent of those immoral houses but none dared communicate his thoughts to the other. The so-called private car was a broken tub of an old Renault and the driver a ghoulis looking crouching beast. We got into the thing and in a few minutes time were in front of a building with all the windows closed.

The so-called gentleman in evening clothes got out of the car and rang the bell. Within a few seconds the door was opened and we quietly entered the house. After our entry the door was locked and a woman in some uniform

stood in front of it. We took a lift for the first floor and were received by a very well-dressed woman of about fifty. She knew something of every language, even a little bit of Hindi.

She said that the place was visited by the Maharajas and other big public men of India. She showed us some of the autographed photographs and I wondered how could she get hold of such a scandalous piece of evidence. As we were coming from London, she showed us similar things about the members of the British gentry as well. She said that life was such and we must be at ease and feel at home. She was very polished, but there was something greedy and cautious in her patronising attitude.

The whole place might be described in just the same way as at Port Said, with certain additions and alterations. In all the rooms there was a great display of taste and the whole arrangement was much more artistic. The furniture, carpets and every other thing was of the finest possible type. The course of events was also nearly the same. The number of girls was much more and instead of seeing them half dressed we saw them naked. There was naked and all sorts of funny dancing and playing of filthy tricks. When there were only ten minutes left from the interval of the show at the Casino,

we expressed our desire to depart.

Banu said, "Before leaving I would like to say this, that we liked your place very much and we have enjoyed the show. We will come some other time. Though we were brought here by this gentleman I think it is fair to pay something."

The manageress replied, "I am glad to hear such a thing from a nice gentleman like you. Next time when you come, we will have plenty of fun but stay a little longer. As the gentleman, who has brought you is our frequent visitor, I am not going to charge anything for him. The charges for you will be quite nominal including drinks and all. They will be six hundred francs per head, that is eighteen hundred francs in all."

All of us were stunned, when we heard that amount. Paying twenty-five pounds at once would have meant returning without delay to London. We thought she was asking this amount, because she had mistaken us for some princes. Banu and Kishore were in tails and I was in a lounge suit. Our eyes conveyed the same idea, when we looked at each other.

Amongst us Banu was the one who did most of the talking, therefore he said, "I am sure you must have mistaken us for some princes."

but I should tell you that we are ordinary students. We could not even pay you one third of what you are asking."

"I never thought you to be princes, because princes pay and never talk much. Those are usual charges. In your case I might make some concession and you can pay say two hundred francs less."

We were determined not to pay more than three to four hundred francs. All this time the fellow who had brought us was standing at a distance and did not speak a word. Banu pushed him forward and asked him to say something; but he said that the lady was quite reasonable and we must pay. He asked us to be quick because we were getting late for the show. Banu offered her four hundred francs, but seeing that she would not accept that amount and was trying to detain us he said that we did not have a single cent more.

On this she said, "You can give me a cheque. If you say that all of you have forgotten your cheque books, name any of the English banks; I will give you a blank cheque and you can fill it up."

This meant that there was no way out and the woman was prepared for every sort of emergency. She stood in the doorway and

blocked our passage. At that time we were in a terrible fix and did not know what might happen next.

Banu thought of behaving tactfully and said, "we do not know you. We were brought by this gentleman and he said there would be nothing to pay. This gentleman is responsible. If there is anything to be paid he will pay you and afterwards we will settle with him outside. It is already late and please let us go."

By this time the woman was quite infuriated and she said, "Do not try to play any of these monkey tricks with me mister. I do not know this man and if you want to know the truth he is my man. No use, pay the money and I will be jolly well glad to get rid of you."

Kishore was boiling with rage for a very long time. There I saw something of a man in him and seeing the woman using such language he shouted at her with vehemence, "Get aside, you dirty thing, otherwise I will throw you out of my way. What do you think of yourself. Now, try to stop me and I will show you the meaning of trouble."

She stood aside, but where could he get? The main gate was locked. His big eyes had become bigger still and were quite red.

He was trembling with rage and was pacing the room violently.

She must have had plenty of such experiences and she shouted back, "I have seen a good many Indians; but never the likes of you. You are nothing but cheap dirty thieves. crooks and dogs. I do not care if I have to keep you here for the whole night. I will call the police and tell them about your monstrous behaviour, and that you want to go without paying anything after having put me under such a great expense."

By this time tempers were running high on both sides and I also started trembling with rage. My friends said that they would not mind if they had to stay there for the whole night. I looked round in the room and saw a telephone near at hand. I made a straight bid for it and said that she need not call the police, I would. This time the so-called gentleman came in my way and winked at the woman. She suddenly cooled down and said that she was sorry for all she had spoken in anger; but we must understand that she had spent nearly twelve hundred francs in drinks over those girls. We might not pay for the trouble she had taken but we must pay for the drinks. Our tempers did not cool down. Banu said that we were not going to pay anything in the house; but we might pay something to the man after reaching

the Casino safely. She said that we should come to no harm and he would deposit us safe and sound. Took a gentleman's word from us that we would pay him at least the amount, which she was supposed to have spent.

The door was unlocked and we jumped into the car. We asked the driver to take us as quickly as he could to the Casino. On the way the man was mumbling all sorts of sentences. He was a poor man. He had brought us with good intentions. If we did not pay he would have to pay from his own pocket. We need not pay the amount which she had spent on the wine. His one-sided conversation was nonstop all the way long. We did not utter a single word. As soon as the car stopped in front of the Casino my friends jumped out of it and made a straight bid for the theatre. The man followed them. I being in a corner took a few seconds to get out of it, but the driver caught hold of my overcoat and would not let me go. He was muttering something in French but the only thing I could make out was that he wanted some fare. Some people on the pavement were coming towards us and I did not want to attract any attention. I took out two half crowns from my emergency money and threw into his palm saying that I did not possess any French money. He seemed not so

very much displeased with the amount and let me go.

The entrance was quite crowded and I had to search for my friends. It was with difficulty that I could find them because they were trying to avoid that fellow, who was whispering into their ears that he would be thankful for whatever they would give him; but they pretended not to know him and appeared engrossed in the show, though they did not understand the head or tail of it. For some time others who were enjoying the show kept quiet, but in the end they ejected him and told the man at the entrance not to allow him in otherwise there would be a row. After that everything was quiet and peaceful and we could breathe freely. We could not go and occupy our seats in the middle of the variety turn, because it would have disturbed others. It was of Josephene Baker and we regretted very much missing it. There was no go. We had to stand at the back. When the next turn was to begin we quietly went and occupied our seats. For the time being we forgot the past experience and enjoyed the show.

On our way back to the hotel we marvelled at ourselves how we had hoodwinked the fellow and paid the man in his own coin. That

pride did not last long, because we were befooled in turn to a greater extent only two days after.

CHAPTER XVI.

During our stay we saw more of the night life of Paris than anything else. I think my friends specially did not leave anything. On the one hand we enjoyed at the places like Lido. American Bar, Hotel Maurice and on the other we did not leave a single filthiest and cheapest place of the City. One of my friends had no moral restraint and his behaviour was of a type, which I leave others to judge. Sometimes one in a day and sometimes two of the so-called women used to enter his room. Not a single house of the type which we visited during the interval at the Casino was left by us.

We thought we got most out of life by drinking, dancing and enjoying to our hearts' content. Only on the New Years' Eve, we visited seven different variety places and dance-halls. We did not know if there were any days, because we counted the dates according to the number of nights. The motto of one of

my friends was "see the world you fool, because there is no life after and even if there is, youth would be gone."

My friends used to tease me so much about my funny ideas and about the character stuff that a good many times it got on my nerves. They goaded me to the breaking point. They used to tease me by saying that I was physically unfit. One evening I was excited and said that I was as passionate and strong as any human being could be. They were waiting for the opportunity and took me to one of those houses. Two of us selected two girls. First the girls were reluctant but afterwards consented to go to our hotel. The girls refused to get into taxi just in front of the house and said that they would like to walk. At that time I was in a kind of maze and did not know what I was doing.

The girls walked with us for some time and afterwards expressed their intentions of having some coffee. We entered a shop near by and had some black French coffee. After that we walked nearly a hundred yards and the girls wanted a taxi. My friends went in search of one leaving me alone with those two girls. For sometime they waited, but when they saw that my friends were out of sight they pretended that they had forgotten something in that shop

and that I should stand there and they would be back in no time; but they never returned. When my friends came with a taxi they found me standing alone. I explained to them the reason of their disappearance.

Banu shouted, "But you fool, why did you allow them to go ?

"As though it was in my power to stop them ! They have forgotten something in the shop and have gone there to bring it back. If I had gone with them, then you would have found that I had also disappeared."

"Well never mind, you get into the taxi with Kishore. I am going to find them out from that shop."

They were not to be found there. We went back to that house, but the owner pretended not to recognise us and said that it was very late. We should go back, because everybody was sleeping. One of my friends wanted to create a scene, but with whom ? The doors were closed and nobody was to be seen. He suspected me of some underhand policy and accused me of letting those girls go, due to my conscientious scruples and morality rubbish. He said that I had spoilt his evening and wasted his good money. He was at liberty to think what he liked. Two days back, we had

hoodwinked some haple and we were paid back in our own coin.

I had plunged heedlessly due to excitement and momentary weakness, but the circumstances were contrived in such a fashion, that they saved me an experience which I did not want to undergo through a most critical period of my life. Kishore was a good and innocent boy at that time, but he liked others having the so-called enjoyment and helped them in that direction. Later he became a hopeless victim of it. All sorts of funny things were happening around me.

One afternoon I was standing alone in front of my window. Just across the road exactly in front of us was another hotel. I saw in one of the rooms a woman lying in the arms of a man. He was kissing and cuddling her passionately. She saw me and she started throwing kisses at me. For the time being forgot the difference between good and bad. I was trembling, my whole body was burning and my blood was boiling. I was the personification of passion and lust. If I had got hold of a woman at that time I would have satisfied myself to my heart's content.

I went to Kishore and told him to give me some money, because I wanted to bring a woman that evening. He smiled and gave me

four hundred francs without a word. That smile had too much of meaning in it, but I did not care. Took one of the waiters from my hotel, who was supposed to be an expert in that line and went in search of a woman. With him I haunted all the places, but did not like any. We entered a coffee shop, because the man was tired and wanted to have some refreshment. There I suddenly cooled down. I felt sorry for my previous behaviour. I felt that I had conquered something and I was happy beyond imagination. I smiled and this time my smile was also of complete satisfaction. The man looked at me and expressed his desire to go home because he was very tired. I allowed him to go home and gave him forty francs tip. He was more than satisfied.

I walked back to the hotel, because I was in a mood. Went straight to my room and slept like a baby. My friends came early in the morning and seeing my room unlocked entered it quietly. They thought in my excitement I had forgotten to lock the room. They switched the light on. The way in which my blankets were heaped up they thought my bed contained two human beings instead of one. They removed the covering but found me sleeping huddle up and my knees almost touching chin. Kishore still thought that I had enjoyed

outside the hotel and woke me up. I told him everything and returned him the remaining three hundred and sixty francs. They allowed me to sleep because they were also tired and wanted to sleep.

I do not pose to be something of a superior being. I had all the weaknesses which are possessed by the weakest type of a human being, but the question is of trial and training up of human mind. I have a control over my character. Now I try what I want to do, what my conscience tells me to do, I feel proud for that and I am happy.

From this time onwards my friends did not interfere and left me free to do what I wanted. In the evenings they used to go to all sorts of places in some of which evening dress was compulsory. I could have gone with them in ordinary clothes but in that case they would not have been able to enjoy to their heart's content. I also wanted some freedom and therefore had plenty of time at my disposal. During this time my only hobby was to tramp the streets of Paris and see whatever I could.

My hasty visits to Notre-Dame, Louvre, Eiffle Tower, University quarters across the Seine, museums and so on and so forth were of the same type as those of a casual visitor who goes on sight seeing and gathers nothing.

My visits to the Latin quarter were frequent and prolonged ones, because it cost me nothing and I did not feel out of place. The poverty of the place, narrow streets and lanes paved with stones, houses reeking with all kinds of smell and plenty of haggard and swollen faces were not a comfortable sight, but still I plodded on and on till I was tired.

During that part of the year a good many of those faces tried to smile, but those forced smiles in such a gloomy atmosphere were out of place. People of all races, ranging from pitch black to the fairest possible complexion, were to be found, but the mixing was so free that nobody seemed to be taking any notice of that. The absence of the colour bar in any form whatsoever, not only there but in all the sections of the French society was really remarkable. The whole of this cannot be assigned to the French Imperialist assimilation policy. A good amount of this mixture is the war and postwar product.

This mixed type is not a negligible quantity but quite a considerable amount, and they are as good French as anybody has any right to be. The future effects due to the mixing of different races on the French social structure and its indirect repercussions are things which cannot be judged beforehand. Certain inferences might

be drawn from some anthropological researches in different parts of the world, but the mixture is so old and the civilisation was so backward that they will be very crude.

Kishore had a very fanciful idea about love. To him love would come naturally, if he were in company of a beautiful girl. It did not matter if she was a brainless woman. He thought himself on the point of falling in love with any beautiful girl he saw. Everytime he was practically in love, but his choice would shift atonce, if he saw another girl whom he imagined to be more beautiful. He expected romance daily and was zealously in search of it. Even in our hotel his eyes would be fixed, if he saw a beautiful girl in the dining-room or the lounge.

One evening he saw a girl, whom I would like to call a woman, who appeared quite good-looking from a distance and was very well dressed. She appeared quite beautiful but after a close and good look at her opinions may differ. She was a woman between the age of thirty and thirtyfive and had a son of about eight years. She knew how to dress and her make-up was quite good. She was a peroxide blonde and I think she visited all the famous beauty parlours of Paris. In any way Kishore wanted to get himself introduced. It did not matter how ? It was beyond him to understand

even a word of any of the Continental languages and she could not speak a word of English.

He called the waiter and asked him by way of private information, who the lady was. He said that she was a very rich Brazilian lady; who came practically every year to Paris and stayed into their hotel for nearly two months. Her son was in some public school in Paris and during these holidays his mother was there to take care of him. She was quite a good lady to talk to and there would not be any difficulty, if we wanted an introduction. Kishore explained his difficulty about the language; but he said that he would write in French whatever he wanted him to write and he expected that the reply would be a favourable one.

The idea was very much appreciated by Kishore and he dictated him few sentences. The question was who was to take the message and get the answer. He himself would not go. Banu was the eldest of us all and it was no good asking him. Therefore the choice fell on me. I was entrusted with the task and he thought that the success was sure. I took the letter when she was in her room and found her son playing in front of it. I gave him the letter to be delivered to his mother and waited nervously outside. Within a few seconds she spoke something aloud.

I thought she was calling one of the attendants to ask him, who this impudent creature was whose behaviour was so crude. I ran to my room and locked myself in. Later we came to know from the waiter that in polite French she was asking me to come in. She herself came outside the room, but found no one. He thought that Kishore was the one who had taken the message and he explained her everything about his inability to understand any language but English. Perhaps for that reason he did not wait for a reply.

After that incident whenever she saw us, she used to smile and wanted to talk to us. I think later on Kishore and Banu took her to some theatre or a place like the Lido or the American Bar, because, as I have already said, during the last days of our stay I was left free to do what I liked.

One day we were having our lunch at Café-de-Paris, a famous and a fashionable place. We had occupied a table in the middle and I was the most conspicuous in the company. It was really interesting to have two well dressed fellows around me and I in dirty flannels and torn sports jacket. I was a vegetarian at that time. My friends called an English speaking waiter and told him to give me some nice vegetarian dishes prepared in pure butter.

After this they ordered an expensive bottle of champagne. Seeing such an incongruous company, the manager himself came and started bowing before us. He made the waiters run tip-toe to fetch our things. A table containing everything of silver was brought before us. All my dishes were cooked in front of us by spirit lamps in silver pots. By that time we were the centre of attraction and all the eyes in the room were fixed on us. Every one was talking, and I think, the subject was the same. Kishore was the constant enjoyer of the Maharaja feeling; but on that particular occasion it was not he but me, and the scene was impressive.

He asked me to behave majestically and keep my chin up. All this show cost him quite a good amount, because the bill for my lunch only was two hundred and fifty francs. They were about to finish the bottle and were tipsy. Banu told me to take them safely back to the hotel if they were drunk. The tips only to the waiters were more than a hundred francs but we enjoyed the show and were not sorry for the expenditure.

In the early morning we were lying in our beds wide awake because that night we did not go out. Kishore thought of ringsing a friend in London and waking him up at about five.

It was quite a thrill to talk to somebody not only long distance but just across the sea. The poor fellow got up and thought that we were in trouble. First we pretended that we really were. He started saying all sorts of things and said that he would fly to Paris and see what he could do. He was very much excited. When the three minutes were about to finish we told him that everything was alright. We just wanted to wake him up, because we were in bed.

What could be the result of indulgence in such fancies? The amount which we had brought with us was exhausted long ago. Kishore and Banu had nearly fifty pounds at the bank in London and they sent a cable asking the manager to transfer the amount to the Paris branch. Even that amount had gone and I phoned Bhola to cable us some money. After that there was nothing left except to pack me off to London so that I might arrange something and send them. By that they would be able to pay the hotel bills and stay a day or two longer in Paris. There was one good thing, all of us had return tickets.

On my way back I was thinking about Paris and the French. At that time my mind was in complete accord with the description of the wily little Frenchman which I had read in

so many books. It appeared that the only thing he was after was your money and he had no scruples. He wanted to fleece you and the moral standard was very low. The so often drawn picture is by those people who write books and who pass through places lik Calais and Marselles and stay for sometime in Paris not as an inhabitant but a visitor.

Under such circumstances their picture would be a true one; but its application to the nation as a whole will be as erroneous as the statement that I have seen China because I have seen Chinese. People who do not think take such statements to be the gospel truths because they have been put in black and white by some great man. Later when I visited Burgundy and the surrounding districts of Lyons and stayed for some time in those places I could understand a little bit about them. They are just as good, homely, honest and congenial people as anybody could be. The village life there is free and wonderful. They are a reedom-loving race. The freedom does not exist only in ideas but it is in a concrete form.

To a Frenchman Paris is not only the capital of his country but something gay and beautiful, which is really French and foreign at the same time. The beautiful city, with all its glories of the past and its present attractions

holds a unique position in this world. The French stage is unrivalled. Its collection of arts and certain revolutionary features of its history are to be found nowhere else. Now it is the centre of attraction for tourists from all parts of the world throughout the year. They come with different motives and all of them return satisfied. That is the reason that it has gathered something cheap, immoral and filthy not only from France but from all parts of the world.

CHAPTER XVII

After my return to London I had to get busy. The Intermediate Examination was approaching and it needed some preparation. It took me some time to settle my mind back on studies. For those few months I worked hard and forgot everything else. I appeared for both the parts and was referred in one subject. I was proud of the result of my efforts. I was puffed up. From that time I thought obtaining a degree was easy and neglected my studies, with the result that I came down in my referred subject and had to take the remaining part of the Intermediate again.

From this time my mind was diverted to the social and political questions. I started reading all sorts of books and experimenting with life in general. I wanted to see real London as a Londoner. I wanted to study the so-called reserved Englishman and his equally reserved social life. It took me more than five years to

understand something because for the first year and a half I was nearly a stranger to it. I began from the bottom, because it was the easiest and in the end knew a little bit about the top as well. My impressions will not be compact, but they will be scattered here and there as I am telling you the whole story.

Our arrangement with the new partener in the flat did not last long. I do not know whether he overheard us or how he came to know, but he knew the truth. Besides, the Civil Service examinations were over and he had plenty of time at his disposal to wander about and find out a place according to his own convenience. With a cool head he calculated everything upto the last farthing.

He came into my room and said, "I regarded you as one of my friends, but you have been deceiving me. I did not expect at least this thing from you. You know my people and I thought you would be a help; but, instead, practically you have been robbing me. I have to pay nearly eleven pounds a month and you have been paying five only."

"You are a first class noodle, if you take everyone at his face value. I like your idea of a friend. You do not know anything about me. What made you regard me as your friend?"

You are a complete stranger to me. Do you think I will disclose all my secrets to you? Could I betray the man with whom I have been living for such a long time and who has reduced my expenses. It was to my advantage to keep my mouth shut. Giving up the game would have meant a loss to me and I had given my word for that. Besides you were plainly told that you would have to pay more for being free from all the troubles and worries."

He did not expect such plain speaking and blunt retort. He expected that I would tell him a bunch of lies. I would pose as a friend and get round him. I would tell him that I did not know anything about it, that I had also been cheated and that we should try to get some money out of Kaka, but he was taken un-awares.

He said, "Do not defend him. He has been robbing you as well. I have calculated everything to the last farthing and the total expenditure does not amount to more than fourteen pounds."

"I do not care. I do not think I could get a cheaper place. If I was paying the same amount to somebody else and if he was making a profit out of that, it is no concern of mine."

"I am not going to stay with you any more,

because I have found out a better and cheaper place. Before leaving I would like to advise you not to stay with him any more because such people are dangerous. I have already come to know, that besides this he has cheated you to the extent of another five pounds."

"Thank you for your sound advice. I know him more than you. I would do what I think fit under the circumstance."

He told me all these things but he never uttered a word when Kaka arrived in the evening. He used to address him as his elder brother and they understood each other perfectly. The only thing he told him was that he was going to shift to some other place, because he had made permanent arrangements, as Kaka was to return to India very shortly and he was sorry to leave him. Kaka replied that he was glad he had found a suitable place, otherwise he himself would have searched one for him. He wanted to see him fixed because he liked him. What a hypocrisy? They were exchanging these sweet words; but their eyes conveyed something opposite.

Kaka was quick in finding out companions. He had to stay for another two months in London and he found out another Indian who was more than a match for him. He was the only one who could get something out of

Kaka and always put him in an uncomfortable position. This man was more than fifty with a monkey-like appearance. His dirty wide teeth set quite apart with some of them missing, were very hideous. His thin deep-set devilish eyes with bushy eye-brows showed that he was very cunning. He was dirty both in habit and mind. This man was some sort of a military officer in some State, but was forced to resign or was dismissed under peculiar circumstances. The ruler being half-mad was removed and kept in custody at some place and his son was put in his stead.

This man being a loyal and devoted servant could not bear such a monstrous atrocity of the overlord and had tendered his instantaneous resignation.

Of course he went and communicated this act of loyalty to his master and at the same time told him, "Though you have spent so much money in order to get yourself reinstated, but all of it has gone waste. Give me only a little bit. I will myself go to England and see that you are brought back to power."

The ruler thought that there was no harm in giving him something out of his pocket money. If the man was able to do something then he would be well paid, if not at least he ought to be rewarded for his loyalty. So the man was

in London with a handsome allowance of forty pounds a month and all other expenses paid. You can imagine the working capacity of his brain—that on the one hand he imagined himself, if not the prime minister at least one of the future important ministers, of the State and, on the other, he was spending not more than six pounds a month and having a net saving of the remaining thirty four. He was trying to stay as long as possible so that he could carve out a little fortune for himself and afterwards live in his community with dignity and peace. From this only it could be gathered how mean he was. The man was so crude in his behaviour that it almost amounted to barbarism.

Such was this new partner which Kaka had found who afterwards made him thoroughly miserable. The man was not going to be turned out since, if Kaka did not like his company, Kaka himself might leave, the other one being prepared to pay for the whole flat himself. Daily quarrels between them and always talking in ironies had converted the place into a mad-house. Most of my time was spent at the college and in the library, and whenever I was there I enjoyed the scene.

I do not know how, but the man came to know that I knew some of the Britishers, who were high officials in India and even in England

were somewhat influential. He started confiding in me. He showed me more than two hundred and fifty typed copies of letters and telegrams and said that he would give me a hundred pounds, if I helped him and took him to these people. All that voluminous collection was a piece of sheer nonsense and stupidity. He had already given some money to the fellows who knew how to make a fool of him. He was going to some of the Labour Members of the Parliament and others, and was hopeful. I wanted to keep the man at an arms length and told him that I could not do any thing for him. After that he never told me anything.

One afternoon when I returned from the College I found a quarrel in progress in its filthiest form, not amongst themselves, but they were on one side and the owner of the house and his wife on the other. The man was a solicitor and his wife a very educated old lady. I do not know the cause of the quarrel but I was told that one of them had misbehaved in a most rude fashion. Both the parties were not only abusing each other, but their respective nationalities.

The old woman was shouting from the top of the stair-case 'you niggers, Indian barbarian dogs' and so on, and spitting at them, while they also were using the same language and

showing their fists from the bottom. The solicitor was trying to drag his wife into the drawing room and saying that there was no use getting into such a bad temper. The best thing would be to call the police and turn them out. He was the only man who appeared calm and sensible.

When I entered the house she started shouting at me as well, but I asked her, what I had done. She replied that I was also one of those ugly fiends and must remain where I was. I started climbing the stairs but the other two from the bottom said that if I had any self-respect I should not go to that dirty bitch, otherwise she would spit on me. If she was not going to call the police, they would and file a suit against her for this insulting behaviour.

From the look of things it appeared quite likely that she would call the police. She also asked me to stay where I was and not bring my dirty self up otherwise the consequences might be bad. I did not listen to any one of them and went up straight. Nothing happened. I with the help of her husband, was able to carry her into the drawing room. She did not resist. She was trembling with rage. I requested her not to call the police and forgive them if they

had done something wrong; but she would not listen to me.

When I could not persuade her I was on the verge of crying and tears began to flow from my eyes. For sometime she looked at me and then suddenly she kissed me. There were tears in her eyes too and she wiped mine and hers as well. After that she was quiet and said that she was not going to do anything.

I asked her the reason for all this. She would not tell me and nobody else would. Therefore I was left in the dark. I never made a serious attempt to find it out because I was not very curious. She said that she had seen and known so many Indians and they were gentlemen; but she had never seen the likes of the two down-stairs.

She asked me not to stay with those two pigs. Another thing she wanted was that they should leave her house at once. If I had any difficulty in finding out a place I could go and live with her son in Bloomsbury who was also studying Law in the University College. I thanked her for the suggestion but expressed my desire to live independently. After that we had some tea and before leaving I assured her that the room would be vacant in a day or two.

On my way down. I was thinking of how to tackle the problem. What would happen if I asked them to leave and they refused? Anyhow I was determined to do one thing and it was that if they refused I would leave the place, but instead I found that they had already packed up. Only my things were lying scattered here and there.

Kaka said that as there was only a week left for his departure to India, he was going to live in the students' Hostel and make arrangements. After such happenings he would not like to live in a dirty place, though he had a right to stay for another three days because he had paid a week's rent in advance. He asked me by the way whether she was going to call the police or the solicitor to bring an action against them. Then I could realise the real reason of their haste. The destination of the other was unknown.

I could not leave the place for another two days because I had not found a room. After this I liked to live independently and away from my country students for two reasons. Firstly I wanted to study the English life and secondly I valued independence more than anything else. The most likely place where I could manage within the amount I was getting were the slums. I saw half a dozen rooms in the slum area of

Comden Town and close one. The rent was quite good though the surroundings were not nice.

There was gas instead of electricity and there was no bathroom in the house. For my bi-weekly baths, because that was all I could afford, I had to go to the public baths which were quite near. I had to revert to my previous diet of bread and potato curry. The expenditure all inclusive was not more than four pounds a month. I was free and I relished that freedom. A good many students wanted me to stay with them but I refused.

Besides me the house contained five more elderly people. The owner of the house, an elderly lady, had occupied the first floor. Her brother and sister-in-law were on the ground floor. On the second floor was a couple in the front room and I had occupied the back room.

From here I started knowing something of the social life of poorer classes. All these people were very nice to me and very helpful. They regarded my affairs as theirs and their kindness was remarkable. They wanted that I should be good and also should be able to get along very well in this world. There was strict observance of the codes of honour, honesty and morality.

Here I could see, how their sons, daughters and all other relatives visited them. All of them lived separately and still it was a single family. As soon as they entered the house, they did not feel out of place; but were one with the family. Cooking, washing the dishes and eating together and back they went to their own homes having spent a nice afternoon.

The talk was also homely. That Peggy was growing up and Dick should pay more attention to her so that they might get married soon. John and Doris were always together and it appeared that they were in love. It was not good on the part of Bill to run after her marriage and it would be better if he was after Mary because she was a nice girl. Aunt Moria was going to give a beautiful wedding present and she had a chill.

Sometimes there might be a talk about a row and about a particular couple that was not leading a happy life. But that was very rare. Everything was congenial and trustworthy, lending and borrowing of money between father and son, brother and sister and then paying it back honourably. If one was in difficulty then the other would say that he need not pay the amount because it had been presented to him. I never came across things like cheating back-biting; and the use of filthy language in general

use even in the poorest places.

All of them lived separately and independently and were carpenters, salesmen, smiths, plumbers, chimney-sweeps or manual labourers. Though there was no question of living together, still there was a unity within a narrower group of these families. There were bad lots too, but they were very rare and they were practically thrown out of the circle. There was no question of inviting all the relatives to things like marriage parties and so on. The family relations did not become strained, but on the other hand he was better liked for being thrifty and saving for a rainy day.

The so-called disruption of the family life in England is only apparent. Blood will always flow together. This can be seen from the question of inheritance in the case of an average English family. Separate living has taught them independence, self-reliance and the raising of the society as a whole to a higher and better level of civilisation. There is a question of the training of human mind and creating that fellow-feeling which makes the society a better and fitter place to live in.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Why does one society overpower another or one nation rule the other? Not because it is heavily armed and you are disarmed, or it has gained control over you by deceit or treachery and now you find it impossible to get out from its monstrous clutches. The truth is that it is on a much higher level of civilisation than you are. There is that existence of trust, honesty, fellow-feeling, unity, self-reliance and higher education within the society as a whole. No use abusing others, and saying that you are the best. Get the above things and nobody on the face of this earth can control you.

There is no question of problematical solution of such facts; put constructive ideas into active force and do not only talk about them. Sometimes such useless arguments are brought forward; that such fanciful ideas cannot be brought into reality in a few years, but it takes quite a long time. Those who say this are

either blind or ignorant of the present and previous social history of the world. When you go through the works of, Tolstoy Trotsky, Gorky, Voltaire, Rousseau and also American, Turkish, Czech and modern Japanese writers, you wonder at the miraculous change brought about in no time.

No use saying how could a society which is oppressed, poor and starving, get the above things. Under such conditions when the oppression was at its zenith the undercurrents were flowing with such a rapidity that trust, unity, honesty and so on were brought about in no time, and they blew up the oppressive with such force that no trace of it was left afterwards. But first there was construction and not destruction. That construction was on a magnanimous scale.

The more I studied the society, the more I found it a baffling problem. In the heart of the slums like Limehouse and China Town I saw poverty in its direst form. The main streets and houses appeared quite decent and orderly from a distance. Trams running, buses plying, people moving about and every other thing was just like any other part of London, but as soon as I got into any of the houses in the lanes I saw hair-raising and unforgettable sights. People were huddled up like sheep or

goats into small rooms.

Sometimes I saw a couple with five children, one or two grown-up, cooking, sleeping and doing every other thing in a dingy little hole. The inside of these houses was reeking, stinking and of the filthiest possible description. Old hags who had not had a bath since ages whined when they saw a stranger entering the house. Peas-pudding and bread appeared to be their only meal. They were lying shivering with cold and had covered themselves with gunny bags.

Statisticians might deny with vehemence that such conditions do not exist, but their data is incomplete. They can not get into such places and, even if they do, they are misinformed. It was through the courtesy and friendship of a person that I had access to such places. I had to pretend that I was their friend and one of them. I felt like vomiting when they gave me some tea but I dare not expose myself.

When I visited the pubs, I saw greedy faces trying to satisfy all their desires by means of drinks. There I saw thieves, pickpockets, drunkards, cheats and criminals of the first water. Not that I asked each one of them their private history but they bragged about their deeds and felt proud for that. The only

thing I had to do was to order a glass of beer, sit in a corner and watch these people. If I found that suspicious eyes were scrutinising me, out I went.

My frequent visits and careless behaviour left no ground for suspicion. Sometimes if somebody was drunk he would start confiding in me and impart his secrets. At that time I must drink and offer them drinks, no matter what happened. These were the only places where I saw the use of filthy language and obscene behaviour.

During the nights I visited some of the houses of Indian dock labourers. The rooms appeared like small cages and the people stuffed in them like animals in the zoo. In one of the rooms which was somewhere fifteen feet square there were six of them. The room was like a cupboard with a double row of racks, three on each side. In these racks caricatures of human bodies were lying covered with dirty black blankets.

The whole thing reminded me of a pre-historic grave in which coffins were arranged in the shelves and the ghosts getting out of them during the night-time and shutting themselves back during the day. In this case the only thing opposite was that the ghosts were out in the day and were back during the night.

In the middle of the room was a rough wooden board supported by two pieces of wood and on it was a partially sand-filled bucket containing burning coals to keep the room warm. The same room was used for cooking and all other purposes. The stink was so horrid that I felt like fainting.

In another house three couples were living in quite a big room. The partition was made by hanging blankets by means of ropes. These blankets had very big holes which appeared like windows, but the windows could never be closed. The blanket walls started from a height of ten to fifteen inches from the ground and all these couples who had to sleep on the ground could see each other perfectly. Besides these moving walls were of such a nature, that they disappeared quite frequently. The sailors and dockhands had caught some girls and were living like husbands and wives. One of the girls was pregnant and from the talk it appeared that the sailor was going to leave her.

Another girl showed me a press cutting in which there was a case going on in the Bow Street against some foreigner. He was keeping a brothel and an opium den under the good name of a boarding house. The girls in different rooms were given a rent book in which the

amount paid was entered regularly. In the house of this man pretentious friends used to come to the drawing room and have tea and smoke opium. Afterwards they used to disappear into these private rooms. The police were on the track and after obtaining definite proof had brought the man to justice.

I asked whether there were any more of such houses. One of the fellows said that there were and if I wanted he would take me, not only there but to cocaine and gambling dens too. I was afraid of my safety and I declined his offer.

The girls there were so crude and rough that they must perforce remain in that area. Their number was quite big and in order to live they had to stoop to such methods. Here I could see that poverty was the root of all evil and her foster-children vice, crime, misery and degradation were seen in their full form.

In every cosmopolitan city such international scum would gather and it cannot be helped. These people are the worst rubbish of the society, with an evil bent of mind and they gather together. They not only affect their own, but those who are near them. Every society is bound to have them. The only thing which the society could do is to take out the

better ones from that rubbish and keep close watch on the others so that their activities might be limited. Slum problem and all other social reforms are leading in that direction.

In order to get into these places the person who used to take me had to pretend that we were the prospective tenants or their friends. A little bit of doubt and we should be in the soup. We had to talk in their language and not in ours. Once a tough sailor in a public house suspected us and said that we were from the West End. Before anything could happen we were out in the tram and I was afraid that we might not be followed and overtaken. After this incident I seldom visited the criminal quarters of London.

Most of my time was spent in the poorer areas like Bow, Stepney, Peckham and Islington. I liked these people and they liked me and I never felt out of place. There was something of that large-heartedness, open mind and equal treatment which is absent in the other sections of the English society. I was always welcome into these houses if I had formed friendship with any member of the family. It did not matter whether he or she was out.

There was no question of parties, but whenever I went I could always have a nice cup of

tea and something to eat. If they were having their meals I must join them. The only thing I did not like was the early arrangement of marriage and the multiplication at a comparatively rapid rate.

One of the many incidents will be quite a contradiction of the reserved nature of the Englishman. I was a partial member of a social uplift institution just near Bow Road. During the day free higher education was given to the boys and girls who had left school and during the night there was adult education. Besides these educational classes there were other social functions like games, parties and dances. Sometimes I joined the classes, but I seldom missed other functions. I was a limited member. One evening there was a fancy dress ball only for the full members of the institution. I went there without knowing. After reaching the place the secretary informed me what the matter was. That evening I had a friend with me. I told the Secretary that it was quite alright and we would go to the pictures near by.

When the old lady who was managing the whole institution came to know about our arrival and departure, she was very angry. She asked the secretary how long it was we had left. Knowing that it was only a few minutes, she called all the members and made them run

in all directions, some to the different bus and tram stands and others to the underground to bring us back, but we were nowhere to be found.

After that she called all the members and gave them a short lecture, that the restrictions were meant for the people of the surrounding districts and not for us. If that was not the case the whole place would have been overcrowded. Besides this served as an incentive for these people to receive some education. We, on the other hand, were quite educated, and all the members gained by our company. In future we should always be welcome, but in order to rectify the present mistake, they were going to write us a letter of apology, requesting us to come and join in the coming social function. Two of the girls volunteered and wrote me a very nice letter.

I never expected that and it was a pleasant surprise. Next time when I went there, those who knew me, came and asked where I had disappeared. Only a few minutes after, they combed the whole district but I was nowhere to be found. I always felt happy whenever I was there. All the boys and girls liked me and I liked them. They had given me half a dozen nick-names like Chorley, George, Bill and so on. If there were free dances in the St.

Pancras area, I invited and treated them. There was something homely about them and instead of being reserved I found them quite frank. Even when I was moving in other sections of the English society I found time to see my old friends once in a while.

CHAPTER XIX

Due to one unhappy incident I had to leave the place where I was living and I was sorry for that. One evening I met a cousin of a very rich friend of mine. He had recently arrived from India and wanted some help as regards business matters. I told him plainly that I should be too pleased to help him, but I must have some money. I was in a tight corner. At that time I did not have anything even to buy my food. He promised to give me some in three or four days' time when I should finish certain business letters for him, take him to the managers of one or two companies and explain to them certain business matters in good English.

For two days I worked for him and on the third day I had an appointment with him in the Regent Palace at about seven in the evening. There I found him sitting with a peroxide-blondé of about twentytwo. We were intro-

duced and he told me that she was a friend of his. He offered me some food and made me completely drunk.

After that he started saying all sorts of friendly things and that he had not seen my room. He would very much like to see it, if I had no particular objection. I told him that it was in very poor quarters and there was not even sufficient furniture for him to sit. He insisted on seeing it and there was no go. I had an inkling as to why he wanted to see it. It was quite apparent that the girl would accompany him.

One look at her and it did not require any thinking. She was one of those street girls which he had picked from Piccadilly. He dared not take her to his hotel because he was afraid of his reputation and he was not acquainted with London life. I was a convenient victim and my room was a safe place.

First I argued out in my mind that both of them were of the same type and would go to some other place, if I did not take them to my room. My refusal would mean a pecuniary loss, because the man would be angry and I should be in greater difficulties. All the time I knew that it was a wrong argument. Even in that drunken state when they put me into the

taxi-I knew that I was acting against my conscience. Even if I wanted to resist, it was beyond my power and I did not know what was happening.

After reaching my room, they naturally asked me to leave them alone for some time. The circumstances were such that I had to leave them without their asking me a second time. The drinks had taken their effect. I started vomiting and was completely out. I went into the bath-room to pour some water over my head. While they were haggling, the girl asking for thirty shillings and the man only wanting to pay a quid, the old lady was busy peeping through the keyhole and listening to everything.

When she knew what was necessary, she called her brother and sister-in-law and started making a row. This would have been a daily and ordinary occurrence if it was one of those boarding houses without restrictions and where plenty of Indian students lived. Nobody would have taken any notice of it, even if there was a scene between the man and the woman.

Here the question was different. I have already described the house and the conditions in which I was living. I was considered as one of the family. She started banging the door

and asked their dirty selves to get out of her good house. When I heard about this I came out of the bath-room half soaked in water and nearly half dressed. Sight of me and she was a ball of fire. Until then, she had considered me a poor, good, honest fellow, but I had turned out to be fiend in disguise. I had polluted her sacred house and I should leave it at once. She thought that I never drank but that state of mine proved that I was a drunkard. I had no excuse for such monstrous behaviour.

As regards those two devils, she was going to hand them to the police and they would be well taken care of. Till then I was listening like an obedient child, but those sentences and I flared up. I did not care about the consequences. I was trembling with rage and the motions became quicker, because I was shivering being wet and a cold draught of wind was coming direct towards me. I asked her to get out of my room, because it was mine and I was paying for it. It was no concern of hers, what I did. It was cheap and mean on her part to peep and listen like that. If she wanted me to leave, I would leave it in due course. She could call the police or do whatever she wanted to, but she dared not utter a single more word against my friend. My word would be taken against hers, and I was prepared to go

to any length.

She was wonder struck. She never expected such a turn in the whole matter. She thought that she would scold me like her own child. I would ask her forgiveness and she would pardon me. Both of them would be turned out of the house, after being frightened and the whole matter would have ended there.

Such would have been the case, if I had kept quiet and afterwards explained to her the whole matter. She would have liked me more for that, and I did care for my reputation. At that time my pride was hurt and I valued self-respect more than anything else. If I had known the future behaviour of the man, I would have acted according to the old lady's wishes and remained good in everybody's eyes by explaining to her that I was doped by this man.

Seeing me in such a bad form, she stood aside, but she said that she would not allow those to get out of her house. She would hand them over to the police. She asked her brother to go and fetch a policeman as there was no telephone in the house.

Before her brother could leave the house, the behaviour of the man was of such a type that I hated myself having come in contact with the man. He started bowing and touching the

feet of the old lady with both hands as though she were a goddess. The man was whining all sorts of unintelligible words and everybody watched the scene spell-bound. While acting like that he was slowly heading towards the corridor. When he had passed all those who were standing, he made a straight bid for the front door. The mean and s'avish behaviour of the man was such, that I felt cheap having defended him.

When the man was running I wanted to kick him with all my might, so that his movement might be accelerated and he might roll down the steps like a football and reach the pavement earlier. I ran after him but it was too late and the man was already in the street. Still, all of them were watching without any movement like mute creatures, the spectators of some unusual scene.

The girl who was also watching all this and knowing that to be the most opportune time to slip, patted the old lady on the back and vanished into the street saying, "Never mind old deary, the world is such and you can not help it."

The scene had ended and the criticism began. The girl was a disgrace to the British nation. She never knew that such people exis-

ted. If she ever saw her again she would hand her over to the police. They thought me to be a good and model fellow, but they had seen me in my true colours. I had no excuse for such behaviour, even if I was doped. All that time not a bad word had passed from the mouth of a single individual and everything was conservative and mannerly. The old lady in stiff collars and Victorian costume was proud of her decent education, relatives, and conservatism. Her pride was hurt and I think it was a unique experience for her. I felt sorry for her but it could not be helped.

I went straight into my room and threw myself on the bed in that sodden state. In the morning both my mind and body were in a rotten condition. If I had gone to the old lady she would have forgiven me and everything would have gone on just as usual. Everything would have reminded me of this incident and I should have felt little always in the eyes of these people. I dressed and walked straight to my college. There I borrowed some money from a friend with whom I was on very good terms and had never asked him for money. He gave me a cheque for five pounds without asking any questions and seeing me in the state in which I was, he asked me to go home straight.

I found a room only a few streets from my

previous lodgings. Paid the remainder of my bill to the landlady's sister-in-law and shifted into my new room. I was sorry to leave the place under those conditions. Later I was informed that the only thing for which the old lady was sorry was that I had left the place without talking to her. I did not care to see or hear from that rich Indian merchant. He did come to see me once in the College but I was not keen to converse with him, so I told him that I had to attend a lecture and that was the last I saw him.

At that time I received the news, or that idea was conveyed to me, I do not remember, that the girl I was married to was dead. I have already told you the peculiar and extraordinary circumstances under which I was forced to undergo the so-called marriage ceremonies. I never felt mentally or morally bound to her. There were some conscientious scruples and feelings of compunction; but they were so feeble that they never entered my way. I always-felt free. Not that they suited my selfish end, but I really believed in them. Other logical considerations and dictates of my inner self were more powerful.

If I had done what the Hindu society wanted me to do, then there was no need of this outward suffering and misery. I could have

been the finest possible type of a bloke. I should have had all the joys of life and there would not have been anything to worry about. It did not matter what kind of life we led. So long as we lived together society had nothing more to say. But I cut her adrift and I think she also did the same, so that both of us were completely out of each other's life. The whole thing was a tragic affair but it could not be helped. To a certain extent it was a sacrifice of two lives and the society understood very little about it. Even if you consider us individually there is the question of sacrifice of at least one life.

The society wants the sacrifice of my life and the killing of that free and beautiful self within me. What does it matter if a few more lives are given before that sacrificial altar where hundreds of thousands are sacrificed daily. All that it wants is that you should help in the free movement of the evil wheel of social structure and push it in the direction of that degradation and demoralisation, a very low level of which has already been reached. Dare you say such things and they will fly at your throat.

It was not that her life was more important to the society than mine, but that I was trying to fight it and she was powerless. She was a convenient instrument and I a dangerous enemy.

The best thing was to brand me as a scoundrel, a heartless and unprincipled fool. I was to be avoided and she was to be worshipped; but I was away from harm's way. The question was of sacrifice of at least one life and I considered mine to be more important. In a way from my viewpoint it was no sacrifice at all but only a happy break-up, in which both the parties understood each other very well, not taking the outsiders into consideration. The logical arguments entering into my mind are too problematical and other extraneous circumstances have entered into them.

I felt sorry for her death as much as anybody else would if he was brought together under the force of unavoidable circumstances which I have already described. But on the other hand I felt free and that joy of freedom was beyond imagination. After that there was not even that little feeling of compunction. There was nothing to worry about and life seemed to be a happy dream. The only person about whom I cared a little bit was uncle Bharat and that was all.

The irresponsible life for the time being made me a care-free type of fellow; to-day was a gay day and to-morrow would take care of itself, but this keep-on-smiling state did not last long. The few pounds which I received

from uncle Bharat had nearly exhausted and there was no possibility of getting anything in the near future.

I had to worry about my existence and find out fair and honest means of livelihood. I was offered some kind of job and I was on the point of accepting the offer, but it was against my principles. After a cool and deliberate thinking I declined the offer manfully. That did not pull me out of the difficulty and I was on the verge of starvation. I was so thin and emaciated that I felt ashamed of visiting my old friends. Some kind of coolness had crept over Kishore and Banu and that was also a reason that my visits even to them were less frequent.

CHAPTER XX.

Somehow Banu came to know about this. He came and scolded me for my idealism. This world never permitted such things and it amounted to madness. If that state of affairs continued for long, my days were numbered. He said that he would write a tell-tale letter to his father saying that he was in difficulties, and he should send him some more money every month. His father would do it and there was nothing for me to worry about.

I knew that the man had a great liking for me, but there was no formality of exchange of sweet-words between us. Instead of thanking him I turned on him and said that had sunk quite low but he should not reach the limit of cheating his own father. There was no need of using such harsh words, because he was in the habit of writing little lies to his father and his father could afford a few pounds extra; but I could not allow him to do such a thing for my

sake. He knew me very well and thought it was useless to put forth any such arguments.

As I have already said that he had a very practical mind, he said, "Here is a proposition. I will take a nice-big flat. Kishore will live with us and my brother is also coming. You can have a nice room all to yourself and pay me a nominal amount of ten shillings per week for it. You cook for us. I will help you and there will be nothing more to pay. We will share all your expenses. You can pay me whenever your money comes and in the meanwhile you need not be worried about anything."

"That's a fair deal and I am prepared to shift whenever you want me to. The sooner the better, find out a flat and let me know.

My new room in the flat in the Kensington area was much better than my old one. I could very well manage within four pounds a month, all inclusive. Though sometimes there was an exchange of hot words as when a few friends live together, the life after all was not so bad.

The only thing I was worried about was to see that they got their meals twice a day regularly and I was so zealous in performing my duties that a good many times I missed my lectures, but I never informed them about it. I never interfered with their free life and they

never came in my way. I did not like some of their ways but I could not influence them. After returning from the College I was busy reading books on all imaginable subjects in my cosy little room. Whenever I felt lonely and depressed I went into their little rooms to watch when they were having dancing, music and all other fun.

There was one very good thing about Kishore. He saw everything, heard everything, but spoke very little. I liked him very much for that. That imperturbable figure with all his faults was always smiling. I do not remember to have heard angry word passing from his mouth. A good many times his silence amounted to stupidity, but the quality as a whole was a good point. He spoke very little but his eyes said too much and for one who understood him there was no need for conversation.

At that time I was trying for a scholarship and I think it took me nearly eight to ten months to get it. During that period my life was more or less uneventful. I did see something more of the Indian students and their inner lives, but afterwards my movements were more restricted to the English circle. This time they were not only in the lower layers of the social strata but in the middle and the upper middle

classes as well.

I left no stone unturned in trying to get the scholarship. I had to play upon the psychology of certain individuals. Specially it was through the courtesy of three military gentlemen, two of them Englishmen and one Indian, that I was able to get it. From this time onwards for nearly two years I had nothing to worry about and my movements were more free and unhampered. I went as far as my means could allow, and saw and studied as much as possible.

Before getting this scholarship, there was one more remarkable incident which, I think, it would be better to relate. K'shore, Banu and his younger brother were going to India during the Summer holidays and I should have been left alone with practically nothing to do. How was I to maintain myself? Banu was on the look-out for some practical solution. He met a very interesting personality. This gentleman wanted somebody who could take him round London, carry certain messages for him, accompany him to pictures, theatres, excursions and explain him everything. In short he wanted a cheap whole time guide according to London standard. Banu came and told me about this. I thought it a fruitful and enjoyable employment, the best way of spending some part of my holidays

and at the same time earning something.

The following day I was introduced to that gentleman and he asked me to accompany him to his residence in Kentish Town so that he might give me instructions. The first thing he asked me was whether it could be possible for me to come and occupy one of the rooms in the same house, because he might want me any time. I told him I had no objections provided he paid for my room, and I would be completely at his disposal. Seeing that it was an expense of nearly thirty shillings a week, he said that I need not take the trouble of shifting, but he asked me to come at about eight in the morning, because he was ready early and wanted to see as much as possible of London within a limited time of two weeks.

I had to get up early every morning, because he was ready early. The reason of my resting still earlier was that, it was forty minutes' run by the Tube and it cost me a shilling a day for my return journey. Whenever I went there I found him ready. If he was having his breakfast, I could have some toasts and a cup of tea otherwise a good many times I had to go without my breakfast. For most of my other meals I had to pay from my own pocket. The hope was of a substantial remuneration.

The man with a parrot-like nose, big blug-

ing eyes, flabby and wrinkled face, bushy eyebrows, negroid type of a forehead, big moustache which had almost covered his sensual lips and hair on his ears had given him some unholy and untrustworthy appearance. His quaint and dowdy dress and unusual height had made him an unsocial figure. I did not like to be near him, but there was no way out. His pompous behaviour and shallow talk were quite out of place.

He said that he had been a very important official in the Government and was now after his retirement, a very rich and influential man in India. His house was always full with hundreds of people of all ranks coming to see him for different purposes. Dozens of people used to walk behind and in front of him, when he had to walk only a few steps. Even after his retirement he was so important that a word from him and he could get anything. The Government was behind him, the people were behind him and he was all powerful. If I served him well he could get anything done for me. His shallow and pompous talk bored me terribly. I did not want anything, because I knew that he was telling a bunch of lies. All I wanted was a fair return for my services, but I knew that I would thank my stars, if I could get something out of the man.

His talk about morals, honour, chastity, truth and high Indian culture, were quite unbefitting his mouth, because his actions were quite contrary. Whenever he wanted to give me a free meal, he used to order a big meal from an Indian Restaraunt and carry it to his room. There we divided it half and half. That is how I used to get a free meal. One evening we were following the same routine. When we got out of the bus just near the place where he lived. I was left a few steps behind because my pace is not so quick. He was in a hurry to get into the house because it was drizzling.

In the way I was stopped by a young street girl of about twenty two and she asked me, "Who is that old man? Is he your relative? I want to talk to him."

Knowing the intentions of the girl fully well and judging the man from his words I thought it best that there should not be any conversation between them, therefore, I said, "What do you want from him? You better leave him alone. Go your own way, besides he does not understand English."

"Does he not?"

Before I could say anything, she flew past me and reached the steps of the house when the man was unlocking the front door. Climbed

the steps and stood in front of him in the open doorway.

When he looked at her she asked him, "Can you speak English."

"Yes please what do you want?"

By that time I had reached the steps of the house and she winked at me with a smile meaning thereby that my scheme did not work and went on talking with the man, "You, see it is like this. I am very poor. I am at a great distance from my house and I have no money to go back. I did not have anything to eat today. I shall be very thankful if you allow me to pass the night in the armchair in your room. I won't disturb you."

What more did he want? It was a golden opportunity, he an old man with a young fair girl alone in his room for the whole night! All the blood rushed to his face and he was trying to hide the inward joy. He was shaking with delight and excitement. With all his big talk there was a reason to feel a bit embarrassed but he forgot that for the time being. She followed us into his room and occupied the arm-chair according to her words. He asked me to hurry with my meals, eat whatever I wanted, because he was not going to have anything, and leave as early as possible. He vani-

shed into the bathroom saying that I might not miss my last tube and that he would turn the girl out after giving her a good piece of advice.

When he had gone she said, "I like your Indian food. Had some this evening in the Taj Mahal. I know dozens of you fellows. They are not bad. Let me see what kind of mug he is."

She picked up from my dish two pickled lemons stuffed with cayenne pepper and swallowed them at once. I stared at her, even an Indian would have thought twice before performing such a feat. I said, "There will be plenty of food left. I do not think the old man will have any and you can stuff yourself with it."

"Do not worry my lad, there would not be anything left."

"You better leave him alone and do not play any funny tricks with him. If you imagine you are going to get anything out of him, you are jolly well mistaken. What fun will you get out of that old pulp, when you know so many young Indian students and I am sure you must be knowing hundreds of your own and from other nationalities."

"I want money and some of these old ones are better.....?"

Before she could finish her sentence the old man entered the room and I was ready to leave. That was the first and the last time when he came to the front door to bid me 'good night.' That night I could not go to bed for quite a long time. I was thinking about the man, the things which he said and the things which he did. Pretending to be a possessor of certain qualities, he was a picture of those which were quite contrary. He knew how to pose, but it was only a pose. He had a firm belief that every one thought him to be a model personality. Those who knew him did not have any such notion. That was the reason I could not get up early the following morning. I was shaken in my sweet dreams and sound sleep by one of the girls in the house.

"She pulled me out of the bed saying, 'Get up you lazy dolt. It is quite late. Your Maharaja is waiting for you downstairs in a rotten state of mind. You are quite late and he has come himself to fetch you. You better hurry along otherwise he might be annoyed.'"

"Oh, hang him. You can not imagine what I was dreaming about and I wish you had not disturbed me."

"I like that. Instead of thanks I get such a fine speech in the morning. Go back to

sleep baby; I am going down and telling him to scram or go to blazes because you won't get up."

"Give him one push extra, when you are throwing him out of the house. I must have my bath before I get ready and I won't be down for another fifteen minutes."

She told him that I was already up having my bath, and asked him to wait for another five minutes. Instead of fifteen I took nearly twenty minutes, because I did not see him till I had my bath and breakfast and when I came down I found him with a swollen face and in a nervous condition. He did not get angry, as was his general habit whenever I was late. The only thing he asked was what detained me for such a long time. He had been waiting for more than half an hour. I told him that it took me some time to take my bath and breakfast. I was ready to accompany him wherever he wanted me to.

He said, "I passed a horrid night and a terrible morning. I am feeling so bad, that I do not think I would go out anywhere. After you left I gave the girl some money and asked her to leave the room, but she would not. I took pity on her, allowed her to sleep in my bed and passed a sleepless night in the armchair.

When it was nearly morning I gave her some money and asked her to leave the room. She refused."

"Why did you let her stay for the whole night? You might have come to some harm."

"You know my moral character. Touching a woman is against my principles. I help the poor. I thought she was in difficulty. When I refused to give her money, she started crying and saying all sorts of things—that I had spoiled her and so on. You know my reputation. I told her, if she would get out of my room I would give her some more money. I took her up to the front door, pushed her out of the house and locked the door. I came back to my room and locked it too. She was still crying, people were moving about and I think she must have been telling stories to everyone."

"I do not think anybody came and asked you anything, then what's that you are worried about?"

"Oh, nothing but I would not like to live in that place anymore. I have been sitting in my room for more than two and half hours like this and now I have come to you. Here is a pound to pay the bills, go and get my things from there. For these few days I will stay with you. It does not matter about the charges."

First when he wanted to come to my place, my landlady had already refused. So I had to say, "She only takes students. You need not be worried. If you do not want to live there, I can fix you up in a cheap hotel, but you will have to accompany me to your place. Nobody will allow me to remove your things from there. Do not be afraid. I will see that you come to no harm. Come with me."

When we reached his place, everything was quite normal. No one took any notice of us. I called the landlady and asked her to fill his bath-tub with hot water and prepare a double breakfast for him. I thought if there were any complaints she would herself speak about them, why should I take the initiative. The only thing she said was that everything would be ready within few minutes. From that I could make out that everything was alright.

I told him that nobody took notice of what he did. It was not India. He must have imagined the whole case according to Indian atmosphere. If somebody had pushed a strange crying girl out of the house, hundreds of people from near about would have gathered and asked her all sorts of questions. They would have believed any tale she might have told them. Not only the position of the culprit,

but that of all the persons in the house, would have been unbearable. It might have led to a riot and what not. He imagined similar circumstances and all the logical consequences in this case too.

As a proof of his good moral character, later in a cheap dance hall in Soho I came to know from the mouth of the same girl, that, after all, she had quite a good time that night and was able to extract five pounds from that old miserly mug. Another story was told by the man who had recommended him to that house. He had tried to paw the landlady's eighteen years old Italian niece at about midnight. He left London for good the following evening. The whole matter was hushed up, because no harm was done and most of the guests were sent to the landlady by the fellow who had recommended him.

I had to see him off. He told me that he would give me my reward at the time of his departure. He was true to his word. He did not give me anything till the train started moving. Then he stuffed two pounds in my hand saying, he would see what he could do for me, after reaching India. At that time a person came running with some Indian sweets and after handing him the packet asked him for ten shillings as the price of those sweets. He said

he did not have nay change and that I should pay the man. So I was left with only thirty shillings in my hand. I did receive a letter and a pound from him. Somehow he came to know that I knew some Britishers influential in Indian politics; but he did not know that I went to see them as friends and not with an ultirior motive. He was so great and big a man that he asked me in that letter to try my level best through these people and make him an important minister in some State. What an idea ? If I had that power at that age !!

CHAPTER XXI

After obtaining the scholarship I had practically no chances of knowing the inner lives of these Indian public men.

Through the ruler of a State I came to know some members of the upper class. One was a Major General the commandant of a military college, and the others were his officer students. Two of them were Barons, three Knights and plenty honourables. I became quite friendly with a Baron and two honourables. Later on two elderly Knights were also very kind and invited me dozens of times, but it was through my previous young friends that I was able to have a better glimpse of their social behaviour and understand a bit of it.

As far as the underlying behaviour of human nature according to the training of mind is concerned, it would practically be the same

within any section of the society. There would be very little difference between the different sections of the same society. In order to understand it thoroughly it would be better to study the section which represents the major portion; but it is necessary to know something of the other sections as well. The remarkable aspects in this case are that the members and their manners are more polished, if that may be called a polish. Their behaviour is much more stereotyped, conservative and traditional.

After the introduction they imagined me something of their own type; but never asked any questions. My name and address was sufficient. I lived in decent quarters and that also removed some suspicion, if there was any. Our early meetings were less frequent, rigid, and very formal. The mutual invitations were to places like the Savoy, Dorchester and Piccadilly. When we came to know and understand each other better, then the number of meeting places increased to places like some foreign coffee houses in Soho and small pubs in the back lanes of Berkley Square and Bloomsbury. They did come to my college but our rendezvous were the above places.

They used to take me out in their own cars with other friends in the country. We used to have plenty of fun in the inns, wayside pubs

and open spaces in the country. Camping out for a couple of days was a common affair. Sometimes girls used to kiss me in order to excite the jealousy of the fellows whom they liked, specially when they were noticing us. Those who knew me were not required to use their intelligence in order to detect this game of playing the fool. The bloke who was after the girl used to tease her by saying that the sooner she married me, the better it was. Others who did not know me, started running after the girl and she pretended not take any notice of them. I enjoyed playing the cupid because I got the best out of it and I was a harmless creature. It was all clean. I enjoyed it very much. I had to save in other directions in order to spend freely with them. Those who were friendly with me told me about their fondness for certain girls. In some cases the parents had given their consent, but in others they indirectly pointed out other girls. Had given hints about inheritance, good family connections and so on. Besides this I came to know something about their parents general behaviour, active part in politics and the lust for social distinction. The remarkable thing in this section was the fight between contradictory principles, giving of freedom on the one hand and trying to control it on the other. I think the latter gained a

point, if you consider the section as a whole.

If there were any dances or other social functions in their military college, they used to send me two tickets and I always went alone. I did not know any girl of their class who would accompany me to such places. Taking any other girl would have created a bad opinion about me. They might have completely cut me off. Besides I had a decided advantage, because every time I had a new dance partner and I was liked by all of them. If there were any University dances in places like the Ritz and the May-fair, I used to invite half a dozen of them making a little party of our own and getting most out of life.

After that much of intimacy for quite a long time they invited me to their own homes and introduced me to their parents, friends and other relatives. I had a few chances of attending garden tea parties and dinner in their secluded circle. The talks on different subjects were more intelligent and refined. Everything was so formal, stiff and rigid that I was afraid I might not commit any silly mistake and make a fool of myself. I felt uncomfortable and quite out of place, but I watched everything with a keen sense of observation. Later when I was used to the surroundings my movements were a bit free.

As regards the rigidity, formality and traditionalism, there was a certain similarity with the aristocratic and upper Indian classes, but there was nothing of the moral degradation, or want of education and absence of trust among its members. There were certain persons of Lady B.....and Mr. D.....type, without any moral restraint but their number was very limited. They added spice to the dull life among its members; were known to everyone and were subjects of scandalous talk among old ladies.

Painting these people and then saying that the whole section is such, is misapplication of the idea for propaganda purposes. Attacking them from this point is just as good as barking at the moon. There are other stronger social reasons which demand social equality. The inequality among human beings cannot be removed. Without inequality society would not work and everything will be at a standstill, but those who reach the top make certain social laws in favour of their issues, which perpetuate certain evils in the society and these should be removed. An active vigilance should be kept to see that they never creep into the society and degrade the civilisation.

Pointing out certain diverces and then saying that this upper circle is socially very unstable is a wrong notion. On the other hand

these are freak cases which are results of marriages with actresses, nippies and so on. Where there is perfect understanding and union of two minds it does not matter who they are; but in the above cases the fellows imagine themselves in love. One wants social uplift and the other has seen something beautiful. In these cases they can not pull on for long and perforce they have to separate. When they commit such acts and act against tradition they are thrown out of the circle and there is no question of their being members of it.

I had obtained the so called polish and after that I did not find any difficulty to move in any section of the English society. During the summer vacations after the examination I decided to go to North Devon or Cornwall and stay in a farm completely cut off from all modern conveniences. It was with difficulty that I could find accommodation on a farm in Hartland, a village in North Devon. The farmer was reluctant to have me, but a very good letter from his friend induced him to have me on the farm.

I stayed there for more than ten weeks and I enjoyed the change very much. I did not find any difficulty to get on with them and they also liked me. My brown weather-beaten face was not foreign to them. The farmer's wife was a

stout woman with motherly tendencies. Three of her elder sons round about my age were in the Navy and the army. The eldest and the next, who were in the Navy were in Honkong. The third son who was in the Army was stationed in Egypt. Besides these she had two young daughters and a little son of about six years staying on the farm.

I was given the room of her eldest son and only after a couple of days was treated like a member of the family. I had that lazy London habit getting up at about eight in morning. For a day or two she did not say anything, but after that she used to pull me out of bed between half past five and six in the morning. By half past six I was ready and before seven we would finish our breakfast. Sometimes just for fun I would work with them on the farm or go for fishing, but most of my time was spent in tramping the surrounding districts. My general routine was to walk after breakfast, walk after lunch and have my tea outside, after dinner to sit, talk, dance or read in the house and then go to bed between eight and nine. The change was so remarkable that I used to wonder at myself.

The rocky coast with deep inlets, small islands near by, undulating hills, lovely scenery, and plenty of light houses were all beautiful.

I enjoyed the lovely weather and every bit of the place was interesting. Often I walked as far as Clovelly, had my tea there and watched the wonderful scenery for hours together. I used to go boating into that shallow bay which was almost like a lagoon and there was no danger of a stormy weather. The whole place was so picturesque, that it reminded me of those fairy tales which I had read in my child-hood. A small church on the rock, the smugglers haunt and a little village on the other side of the bay fitted into the picture very well. When it was late I used to lie down in the boat in the middle of the bay and watch the burning lights around me. It was so charming that I felt my spirits wandering everywhere and my lifeless body lying in the boat; but in reality I was nowhere. There was that feeling of happy idleness which makes people forget everything for the time being. Those flickering and twinkling lights seemed to say, "We were showing you the path to some unknown destination, just follow us and leave this miserable world;" but I was happy in the state in which I was and did not like to move.

Most of the place was owned by an old lady who was a firm upholder of manorial system and all the conservative traditions. It was a quaint sight in modern England to see her

going about in the stiff Victorian dress with two other ladies and in a carriage drawn by two horses. She liked her tenants to bow in the old fashion and be regular in their Sunday church service. She went to church not to pray, but to keep a close watch on all those who had assembled there and call to account the absentees.

The village of Hartland itself was in such natural and charming surroundings that I never found time hanging on my hands. First I thought that it would be a troublesome job to pass my time in a lonely and secluded spot. It was like that for a first day or two. I wanted to go to the pictures or other places of amusement because I could not get sleep till late but soon I got over that bad habit and found a decided change in my health. Even my visits to the light-houses were very interesting. They were constructed on different scientific principles. Some were worked by electricity and others by oil. The engineers were never tired of explaining me the refraction and concentration of light, the arrangement of lenses and their whole working. I liked watching the ships from the top which appeared like toys. Some of these light-houses were miles away from Hartland and I used to have free teas with these engineers. We talked on different subjects and they asked me

a great deal about my travels and India.

The coast was rocky and practically there were no beaches; therefore sea bathing was not a pleasure as on the South-coast; but with those steep cliffs, unique sun-sets, ships on the horizon I was in a dreamland all by myself. The girls from the farm did accompany me but that was seldom. I liked walking alone because it suited my fancy and I was always engulfed in my own thoughts.

One afternoon when it was raining quite heavily I felt like having a long walk, I was feeling very warm and active and wanted to act according to my fancies. I went out in shoddy flannels, torn sports jacket and worn-out shoes, besides that I did not take anything with me. Brisk walk and warm wind made me feel quite pleasant. Hot blood rushing to my face and the rain drops striking against it appeared like vain attempts on the part of a drizzle to extinguish the forest fire. I walked for about two miles. The rain had stopped. A cool breeze started blowing and I thought best to return. Nature was in her glory all around, a few huts here and there, otherwise everything was beautiful and quiet. There was nothing of that perpetual hum and smoky, foggy, and rotten atmosphere of London.

On my back down the hill I was soaked through and through. Water was dripping from my clothes, but still I felt quite pleasant. Sometimes blasts of cold wind made me shiver. I quickened my pace in order to reach the farm early. When I was nearing the farm I met a fat vain and pompous personality with two girls on either side and all riding beautiful Arab steeds. Nearly fifty yards behind them was another girl coming on an Australian pony and she did not appear to be a good rider.

Seeing me in that condition, but still quite cheerful, she stopped the horse in the middle of the road and said, "Young man, from where are you, New Zealand or Argentine? I am sure you do not belong to this place. During the last few days I have seen you quite often. Perhaps you have some relative here."

"All your guesses were quite off the mark. Make a few more and this time you might be right."

"Well I never? You are a seasoned resident of London but you do not belong to that place either, because you are quite dark. You are not what I imagined you to be. Anyhow from where are you? I would very much like to know."

"This time you are right. As regards your

question I am from India and enjoying my holidays here."

She was taken aback. She never expected such an answer and of all the places she could not think of me from India. Seeing that her friends had reached the top of the hill she said, "One of my relatives owns this place and nobody is here excepting us four. I am in charge of the place. To-morrow afternoon do come and have some tea with us. Mrs. Burns at the farm with whom you are living will tell you how to reach our place. You might catch cold. Run along and get into some warm clothes. Mind, do not forget."

Before I could say anything she trotted up the hill. I had heard something about the owner of a large bit of land there and I could very well guess who she was. After reaching the farm I felt quite cold and got at once into warm clothes. I sat in front of a nice warm fire and had some whisky. Later I had tea with all the others on the farm.

I told Mrs. Burns about my new encounter and the invitation to tea. Before I could ask her any questions she was so exultant that she told me more than what I wanted to know. They were the gentry and commoners never got a chance of mixing with them. It was quite an

honour that they had invited me to tea. I should not miss the opportunity, otherwise she would be sorry. She felt so much about it, that under no circumstances I would have liked to disappoint the poor good woman. In the evening she gave me some more hot lemon and whisky to make sure that I should be quite fit the following day.

Besides the people I have already described, there was the curate and his wife, a conservative Member of Parliament and an Yorkshire student from my own college.

Seeing me he shouted, "Hallo, old chap, now what has brought you here? Ganesh, how did you get to know these people? Of all the places I could never dream of seeing you here. You are very quiet at the College and I did not know that you were a gay-go trying to pick up beauties from the wild."

Before I could say anything the girl who had invited me intervened, "We are pretty old pals and do not imagine yourself to be the only one who knows him. I know him better."

"Now, tell me another, the next thing you will say will be that you have transplanted him into this quiet life in Devon."

"Of course, I have and I have fixed him up with Mrs. Burns. From him I learnt and am go-

ing to learn quite a good bit about that wonderful country India."

The girl was so smart and quick-witted that Jackson was led to believe that we were good old friends. I liked the girl and it would have been unsporty of me to let her down; besides I felt proud of being called an old friend in a strange circle. I did not know much about Jackson too.

He said, "You would not be able to get much out of him. He never talks of those old and forgotten glories, the cultured civilisation, and the colourful East. The only things you might hear from him, are the social evils, degraded society and so on."

The party was quite informal and the curate and his wife were quite young and full of life. The only person who was a bit quiet and disinterested was the fat and pompish-looking individual whom I had seen riding with the two girls the previous evening. The only thing he wanted, was that the same two girls should sit on either side of him. The other three were also invited guests and perhaps they thought that the girl did not think fit under the circumstances to ask me to stay in their villa and fixed me up on the farm.

The curate said, "The old friends are so

much engrossed in the conversation, that they have forgotten us. I suppose you do not mind introducing the gentleman."

As I have already said, the girl was very smart. She was quick enough to remember my name very well and spoke with great familiarity. "How stupid of me, I am so sorry. Here is Ganesh, a student from London, (pointing towards others) the curate and his wife and my friends."

"Pleased to meet you."

After introduction, tea was served and all of them were quite nice and interesting people. Starting from golf the talk ended in the anthropological behaviour of South-sea Islanders. The tea was served in the garden and after tea I had the opportunity of having a walk with the host. She liked my behaviour so much that for the remaining of my stay of five days, I saw her, if not twice, at least once a day. I could not ride, otherwise I might have had quite an enjoyable time.

The maid who had served us told Mrs. Burns that I was quite an old friend of all those people and I was also one of the gentry. I explained to her that I was very poor, but I had some rich friends. She thought that I was trying to hide certain things. From that day

she was very polite and I felt it. When I left she said that if ever I came to Hartland I should stay with her and she would think it an honour. I told her that I loved the farm and I would not dream of staying at any other place.

During my stay I was so much cut off from modern life that if ever I made up mind to go to the pictures or do some shopping, I should have been required to cover quite a long distance and spend half a crown for my bus ride in order to reach the place and still the return would not have been satisfactory, but I was so much used to the village life that I forgot everything.

The life in the village was practically the same as in India. I liked it so much that I was reminded of the village where I was born. All the village folk were nice and homely. There was always an exchange of greetings whenever I saw any villager for the first time and used to talk with them about the weather, the crops and so on.

I went to all the churches, but I never told the people of one sect that I had been to the other. Every one imagined me to be a good Christian belonging to their sect, but I was something else. I myself did not know what I was? The only thing I knew was that I was

a human being. Beyond that nothing else mattered. Sometimes they did talk stupid, but their stupidity was so sincere that I felt happy by their side. Here I was reminded of the proverb that where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise.

Their only politics were that beer was heavily taxed and duties on corn should be lower. Whether they should send a conservative or a labour M. P. who would serve them better? Why has he not done certain local thing for them? He should be called to account. Beyond that nothing else mattered. It was of no consequence if a Conservative or Labour Cabinet was ruling the country. They did not care two hoots, if China became a province of Mexico or general Shimosky of Russia occupied the throne of Siam. Their local affairs were enough for them.

It was Easter time. The whole of the village was in a stir. Every one was busy. The farmers brought their farm produce to the churches as offerings, because all they had was due to the grace of God. They had taken those offerings for the present happiness and a further good harvest. The amount obtained from the sale of those goods was to be used for the poor, needy and suffering in the village. It was not like India where the amount is used for making these

fat, uncouth, and idiotic priests fatter still and this for degarding the society.

There were village games, gala nights, fancy dress balls, and I joined all of them. I was known to all the villagers and knew all of them. The beautiful sunsets of the rocky Devon are as fresh in my memory as though I had seen them only a few moments ago. I used to sit on the top of those cliffs for hours together and think and think. Those thoughts were beautiful and I felt sorry when I left the village.

My friends could not even dream that the change would be so wonderful. I was red and robust. When I looked into the mirror I wondered at myself. My old habits, a few days of London life—and I was my former self again.

CHAPTER XXII

After my return I had to find a decent place to live in. Money was no consideration, because I was getting a sufficient amount, not only the scholarship but something from home as well. This time, I had to take some trouble to find out a good place.

The house in which I decided to live was run by an irritable type of a young lady. She was somewhat educated and came from a good family. Her quarrelsome nature made it very difficult for the boarders to stay for a long time. She was of a very independent nature and her independence had reached such heights that even her husband found it difficult to stay with her. She was a woman of taste and liked everything clean and tidy.

She was discriminatory even as regards to the admission of boarders in her house. In the beginning she was of the opinion that if she was

going to have good class students in the house, then she should not have any one else, specially young girls; because the company would not be congenial. She was not wrong in her judgment; because so long as she stuck to that principle everything went on smoothly. She had formed certain regulations and wanted their strict observance.

She wanted only two Indians in the house and when I asked her the reason for this she said, "Please do not take it ill. It is not that I am prejudiced. I make no distinctions. On the other hand I want you to derive certain advantages. One or two of you people, one or two from the Continent and the rest I want to be good class students from the provinces. You will learn something from them and they will derive certain advantages from you. There will be mutual advantages. The company will be select. If I were to have more of you people then no one else would be coming and that is what I do not like."

She was not speaking her mind freely but one thing was sure that she was speaking the truth. Having the house filled up by Indians was bad even from business view point. Then she would have been dependent upon Indians. Perhaps Indians did not like foreigners, because practically in all the houses where there were

Indians, people of other nations could not be found.

The number of my visitors was greatly reduced. They thought it degrading for me to stay under such restrictive conditions even in a free country like England. It was below their dignity and humiliating to visit me at such a place. Everywhere I ought to fight for freedom and leave such a place at once. According to them I still possessed those slavish ideas, which should have been discarded long ago. My opinion about them was different and I liked the conditions in which I lived. They thought I disliked Indians with the exception of some of those hated slavish type of Indian aristocrats.

The English students in the house were from all parts of England. Some of them were Cambridge and Oxford dons who had come for things like the Civil Service, Bar, Solicitor's training, aviation and similar other courses. Most of these boys belonged to different sections of the Middle Class and I learnt quite a good bit from them.

Before my arrival there was only one Indian in the house and I thought that I was the second one; but only a few days after there was one more addition. Without asking for any explanation the landlady said, "You must have been wondering about the arrival of our friend

Sanath. I wanted to explain to you this during the last few days but I could not get a convenient opportunity to do this."

"Yes, I was wondering. You said that there would be only two Indians; but now the number seems to be increasing. Not that I mind, but I am just telling you."

"I do understand. Mr. Chandra was my first guest. He was the first one to enter the building after the opening of this new house. I like him and I like you too. Now all of us are a happy company and I would not like to break it."

"But I am not complaining."

"Oh! It is not that. I want to remove certain doubts from your mind. Chandra and Sanath are inseparable twins. Since a long time Chandra wanted to bring him. After your arrival he said that he must have Sanath in the house or he would leave the place. One more would not make any change. If any one of you leaves, then the number would again be limited to two."

"To tell you the truth. I was a bit uneasy in my mind and I am glad that you have told me everything frankly."

Chandra and Sanath were of a very secluded

and reserved nature. As a matter of fact, the room of one of them was not only adjoining to mine, but if a big door was opened our room could be converted into one.

We used to meet each other at least twice a day either on the breakfast or the dinner table or in the drawing room; but, in spite of all this, for more than three months we were quite strangers.

I imagined myself to be of reserved nature; and if they wanted to be left alone, why should I take the initiative? It was gradually that we came to know each other and later became the best of friends. Sometimes it happened that my friends were their friends too and so we were brought together.

Later our friendship developed so much that all our troubles were mutual and not individual. There was nothing like private or personal. Everything was frank and open-hearted. We three with all those English boys were in a world of our own and we were having a jolly good time.

To my mind they were that rational type whose description I had already heard from that philosopher friend of mine. Their company was select and both of them were gentlemen of taste.

Chandra was a handsome youth. His big round eyes, hooked nose, arched eye-brows, a beautiful white set of teeth, thin lips, dimples on both of his cheeks, soft skin and his long black hair brushed backwards gave him an effeminate look. His thin and medium stature and smart dress gave him an impressive appearance from a distance.

His mind was in a constant perturbed state due to the delicate and sickly condition of his health. Though he was honest and fair in his dealings, cheery and jovial in his behaviour, always of a friendly and kind temperament, still there was something cunning and untrustworthy about the man. To have complete faith and reliance in him was out of question.

Some of this may be assigned to the fact that he always looked to the gloomy side of life and was confined to bed. The man had some inner secret which he dared not divulge and which he was powerless to fight and he hated the world for that.

All these reasons made him dislike the girls immensely. He hated the sight of them and still he was fond of one or two. If he was after something he would try to obtain it at the risk of his life and that was one of the finest qualities in him. It was due to this that he always topped the list in all his examinations

and afterwards had a long spell of serious illness.

Having all said and done he was a select and cheery soul. He was a nice and cheery soul so long as you talked to him on the subjects which he liked. He was very reserved and therefore those who did not know him found him a tough problem.

As regards the analysis of his ideas they were clear cut and fixed. But still with regard to a good number of things he is a problem.

Sanath, on the other hand, was a frank and open-hearted fellow. He had a loving nature and a large heart. He was of a very reserved nature; but for those who knew him he was as meek as a lamb. His early sufferings had made him understand the world in a better way.

There was something of a man in him. He fought the world valiantly and in the end he was successful. He joined the Imperial Service. That tall and handsome figure of a man whom I imagined to be a dandy, who was proud of his features and puffed up was in reality something else. It was only within a very limited period that I knew him. When I knew the real man inside, not only I liked him, but I became very fond of him. I fell in love with him and now I am one with him.

I was happy with both these boys and the company and life appeared like a happy dream. There was nothing to worry about, but to see the world and see it thoroughly.

One incident affected me most. It had such indirect repercussions upon my life, that I was completely a changed human being.

At that time I had formed friendship with two students who were a bit of gay birds. One of them was so loose that whenever I saw him, he talked of nothing else but women. His constant talk and unavoidable company influenced my way of thinking to a great extent.

I read a few pages of English translation of Rasputin's philosophy of life or some such thing. I do not remember the exact context of that, but afterwards my mind was in a constantly perturbed state.

My sceptical sense became very sharp. The differentiation between good and bad was too blurred. I began to wonder what was good and what was evil in this world.

There is no such thing as good or bad. Everything is good or everything is bad. It is the creation of your own mind. If you can reach that state where there is no difference between good and bad then you are nearing perfection.

There is something alive in you, which you cannot explain. You may dub it as soul or whatever you like. That inner-self, that life is beyond human understanding. If that inner-self tells you that all is good, then you are above humanity.

Otherwise that inner-self constantly keeps on reminding what is good and what is bad. For every action there is an inner forecast. It requires no training or teaching; it is automatic. The more you rely on it, the sharper it gets, and after a stage it reaches accuracy.

After constant repetitions of certain actions especially the bad ones the conscience may become dormant due to the perverted state of mind, but still there is that feeling of compunction which at times reminds you, that your actions are bad.

Due to this sceptical state of mind my idea about evil became somewhat confused. In order to know an evil if you are undecided, you should test it; if you are sure that you can stand the test. After that, if you are sure that it is evil, then never go near it.

At that very time I read from a scientific book something about atrophy and talked about it with my friends. I started brooding whether some parts of my body were not becoming use-

less due to disuse.

When in such a state of mind, one fine evening during the Easter Holidays I was a bit tipsy and in a very gay mood.

One of my friends said, "I think Ganesh is unfit otherwise he would not be avoiding girls like that; but the pity is those silly creatures run after him. I envy him."

"Please do not say such things."

"Well it is the truth. You must be a gay go on the quiet and pretending to be a moralist before us. If you have some stuff show it man; show it. I want nothing else but just to test whether you are fit or unfit."

That remark and there was a rush of a whirlwind of ideas into my brain. I began to wonder if it was not actually the case. I wanted to test myself and all these ideas pushed me heedlessly in that direction.

I said, "Get me a girl and test my passion."

That was all they wanted. It did not take them long to pick up three street girls into our car. At that time evil had taken such a stronghold upon my mind that I was next to the devil himself. I did most of the talking and had the best of my choice.

The hot blood was rushing through all my

veins and my heart was throbbing tremendously. My face was so red and hot that it gave a pleasure to the girl to cling to me.

The lights went pale in the room and she melted into my arms like butter. She looked at me, but I was staring at her in such a fashion that she was frightened. I clung to her with great passion and then she knew the reason of that stony look in my eyes. She was as cold as ice. Then she suddenly clung to me with great passion and forgot for the time being that she was a street girl. A few minutes and everything was gone.

The girl had gone. My friends returned to their respective rooms with an air of satisfaction. They were successful and I had failed. I returned to my lodgings.

That night I could not sleep till the late hours of the morning. For hours together my past life was dancing before my eyes. Then suddenly I cried, not for a short time, but for hours together and fell asleep.

That sleep was not a sleep at all, but full of nightmares. The penance which followed afterwards was a horrid one. There was something burning inside me and for days together I used to shut myself in my room. I was greatly reduced and I hated the sight of every-

thing.

Sometimes I used to argue in my mind I had done no wrong. I am free; I can do whatever I want to, then why all this misery and suffering for nothing? But from the heart of my hearts I knew that I was lying before my own conscience and I must suffer.

That was a lesson, which taught me something and which was for myself and nobody else. I got some strength and energy of mind which told me that I could trust myself and since then I think I have been able to understand myself.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I was after something real. So real that I could lose myself and forget the world for ever. I met an American blonde, a fresh girl of about eighteen. She had an attractive and innocent look. She was very weak and I was not wrong in my judgment.

I imagined myself to be in love with her, but only a few days after the illusion had completely vanished. Her lovely figure, attractive features and soft skin made me feel drawn towards her. I knew that it was not the complete understanding of two human minds, where they merge into one, but a momentary infatuation which vanished like a ball of smoke.

She was so weak and stupid that she was easily led astray. She fell into the hands of those gay birds whose only aim in life seems to entice these weak natured and poor girls. Show them the so-called life. Take them to

pictures, theatres and so on, drug them and spoil them. Some of them might be able to find out their mistake and correct themselves, but others are lost forever.

She thought she was hoodwinking one and all and acting superbly, but she was totally deceived. A kind of icy coldness had crept over me. Whenever she came to see me there was that blank stare in my eyes which frightened her.

She told me all sorts of things about my indifference, but with no effect. One evening she was completely broken up and told me everything with tears in her eyes. That was the only time when every word of what she said was the truth and that was the last time when we had a long talk.

She was in love with a poor boy who was writing short stories, and was going to marry him very shortly. She had lost her job and wanted some help. I helped her.

Some time afterwards she told me that she was married. She was suffering from T. B. and her husband from some other chronic disease; and she was in need of some money. I gave her as much as I could.

My liking for her had taken the form of pity. I did whatever I could because she was

suffering. From that time whenever she saw me or wrote me, it was for money. Her demands even on the 'Phone were abrupt,—she wanted such and such amount.

One evening she rang me up and asked me for some money. I told her that I did not have anything, but she replied that she must have something and she was in a great difficulty.

I told her that I would try to borrow something and she should ring me up in the morning. I tried my level best, but I could not get anything. I felt sorry for her. In the morning when she rang me up I expressed my inability. Bang went the 'phone and that was the last I heard from her. I do not think that she believed a word of what I said. I did write to her but with no effect. She had completely vanished from my life.

I became a matter-of-fact fellow. The general changes in life did not affect the inner tranquillity of my mind. Knowing, seeing, understanding and improvement was all I wanted.

Wherever I went I did not find any difficulty to get on splendidly with the inhabitants of that place. For the time being I tried to live, behave and think in the same way as they did. This made things easier for me and they liked me.

In England I was thoroughly English as regards my general behaviour. As a general rule I went out of London during the holidays. I visited nearly all the seaside resorts on the South Coast and a few on the East and West Coasts of England as well. At good many places I was mistaken for a sunburnt Englishman from the Tropics, but I told them who I was and asked them what they thought of us, because they knew nothing about India. It was all very interesting to listen to them and I made plenty of friends. They came and disappeared like fairies in the dreamland. Everything was sincere. There was nothing to give and take except that warm feeling of humanity which makes you feel happy. This brought before me the truth that friends may come and friends may go, but friendship still is true.

My frequent rendezvous were Brighton, Bournemouth, Hastings, Bexhill, Norwich and Blackpool. Brighton is particularly fresh in my memory due to one of the memorable and happy evenings which I spent there.

It was the New Year's Eve. Sanath and myself decided to enjoy a quiet evening in the Metropole. It was quite an expensive place and we occupied the most expensive suite overlooking the sea. It was the Grand Dinner

Evening at the Metropole. The Scotch owner of the place had invited his friends from all parts of the country and most of them were members of the upper classes.

People were pouring into all the public rooms in their evening clothes and in their best form. There was a constant pouring of words into our ears like Lords, Sirs, Captains and so on.

Our shabby clothes and careless behaviour had created quite an impression. Sanath addressing me as Captain and I calling him by his pet name made them imagine all sorts of things. I was mistaken for a prince and he for an important official in India.

We decided to act and play our parts superbly. It did provide us with a good bit of amusement and we enjoyed the fun very much. A few wanted to know who we were but after knowing indirectly that we did not want ourselves to be made known, nobody came and asked us anything. We kept them guessing. Whichever way we passed, I noticed ladies whispering into one another's ears and it made me feel elated.

We casually entered the Bar. One of the young lords started talking to us. In the general talk we came to know that all those who

were present in that room were known to him. We ordered the waiter to serve a few rounds of drink to every one present in the room. After that we disappeared into our suite to get ourselves dressed.

Sanath had forgotten such of his things as studs, stockings, handkerchief and so on. We had to order new ones. We had already tipped the waiter to arrange a table for two in the centre of the Dining Hall. We came tiptop and occupied the table when the hall was full and the dinner had begun.

Price was our only criterion for things that were best. We ordered the most expensive wines and the cracking of bottles attracted every one's attention. By that time every one had formed some opinion about us.

In the dance hall every time I had a new good partner and I did not miss a single dance. I do not remember to have talked. The only thing I remember is the rhythmic slipping on the floor, with some one beautiful, and a joyous feeling.

In between the dances we used to slip for drinks every time with new friends. That was the only evening when I wanted to get tipsy, but the excitement was so much that I was as sober as I could be. That was the first time

when I realised that I could stand drinks though I disliked drinking. I was a favourite among the ladies and was surrounded by a group of four or five.

That was the evening when every one tried to look happy. Wherever I looked I received smiles. I wondered whether the world could be as happy as all that, if the inward happiness was as much as it appeared outwardly at that time.

At about midnight the lights were switched off. For a minute or two everything was dark and quiet. Exactly after twelve the whole place was brilliantly illuminated by a good number of extra lights.

The new year had come and every one was happy. All of us joined hands and sang plenty of songs. There was squeezing of hands, pushing one another, embracing, jolting, kissing, shouting and everything was in a happy turmoil. Everything went quiet as soon as the girls arrived in their Scotch costumes to display some of their national dances. The best I liked was the sword dance.

We decided to go round the hotel in a procession. The climax of the whole thing came, when we were climbing the steps of the second floor. Just in a corner a pretty golden

child of about four was sitting on the shoulders of an old bearded gentleman nearing his century. She was stark naked and round her neck was a horse shoe on which was written the New Year. Everyone touched, waved or threw things at her and she was smiling all the time.

I was quite close to her and was looking with an intent stare into her beautiful eyes. That heavenly child looked at me and then suddenly throwing her little arm round my neck she kissed me. It was the sweetest kiss I ever had. After that I was carried shoulder high all around the building.

We danced till three in the morning, but still I felt quite fresh. The crowd was melting and we decided to retire into our rooms. Before going to bed we searched our pockets. All that was left between us was thirteen pounds. We looked into the menu and the breakfast was eight and six each. We looked at one another with a meaningful smile and went to bed.

At about seven the maid came and inquired when would we like to have our breakfast.

A big yawn and huddling myself together I covered myself with a rug and said, "No.....o breakfast please."

She quietly got out of the room, noiselessly closing the door behind her. As soon as she was out of the room, we jumped out of our beds full of electric activity and had a sham fight for a few minutes. Got singing into our baths and were all packed up within no time.

Downstairs the manager himself was waiting at the counter. No sooner did he see us than he said with a smile.

"Good morning Sir. Returning to London, Sir. Hope you had a nice time."

Before he could say anything further both of us replied together, "Good morning, we had a lovely time, thank you."

"I am glad Sir, hope to see you soon."

I said, "The bill please."

The clerk at the other end of the counter had already prepared the bill and I handed him the amount. After taking the change I gave him a pound to be distributed among the waiters and the maids.

The Commissionaire had already ordered a taxi and the porter had placed our little bag into it. I gave them half a crown each. The big Daimler headed for the station. The meter showed a florin and I gave the man three shillings.

Took out our little bag from the taxi and quietly slipped into the waiting room. After throwing the burden into a corner I gave an exclamation of relief that everything had ended so finely.

The total amount in our pockets was eight pence but we had our return tickets with us. So we decided to make the best use of the remainder. At the station stall we pretended not to be hungry and ordered two small cups of coffee and rolls, the total cost of which was six pence. But the girl at the counter had seen us getting out of that big taxi and gave us a meaningful smile, meaning thereby that gay birds out of funds needed only a little detection

With the remaining two pence, we bought a copy of the Times and divided the paper, between us in order to pass one dreary hour between Brighton and London. After reaching Charing Cross we walked upto Piccadilly, took some money from the bank and had a hearty meal.

During all these years of my stay in London I used to say to myself that no woman would ever cross my path. I was free and I would always remain free. The path of progress was open and I would go up heedlessly till I had obtained what I wanted.

But as the time went by the first denial became my primary want and if any progress was to be achieved it was with co-operative help and not alone.

It was at that time that an infinite longing had taken a definite shape within me. The dormant fire which all along was kept in check had burst forth like a volcano with such a gusto that it was impossible to stop it.

I had a yearning to see a face which I had seen years back and which I always tried to avoid. For one thing she was a friend of a friend of mine and, secondly there was an egoistic motive. I was madly in search of that very face and strated haunting all the possible places. In the end I was successful

When I first saw her there was something kind, homely and attractive about her as far as I was concerned. I looked at her for some time and then quietly went into my room thinking. I was called only a few minutes after, because a friend of mine had pulled a silk thread out of her stocking and she was in need of some cotton and needle to mend it, because she could not go out like that. I was the only fool who avoided girls and kept such idiotic things.

Again I had to enter their room with the

necessary things. I had to wait till she had finished her mending. She took out her horn-rimmed spectacles from her bag and after putting them on started mending her stocking. While she was in that homely attitude I liked her watching. After finishing her work, she returned my things and I left the room quietly.

As I was closing the door I heard her saying, "He is a funny bloke." He is not at all polite. Whenever I come I find that he instantaneously leaves the room. Perhaps he hates me."

"I am not in the habit of eavesdropping but when something was said about me I could not move.

"Ho ! no it's not that. He has turned potty. He remains secluded. Whenever we come with some friends he leaves the room."

"That means he is a good boy and better than you."

The conversation had taken a different turn and I went out for a walk. I liked her taking my part. At times I used to remain for some time in their room when my friends came with other girls, but whenever she entered the room a kind of nervous feeling used to creep over me and I always left the room instantaneously.

My friends used to talk common and cheap

things about their girl visitors. When they spoke about other girls I was disinterested, but anything against her and my whole conscience would deny forcibly everything. Sometimes I was on the point of revolt. I used to say to myself that I was unconcerned. Why should I have any kind of feeling for her? But all these arguments were of no avail. All of them proved superfluous. The more they talked ill of her, the more I liked her and disbelieved them.

At times she used to request me to remain in the room and I found myself unable to move. She would sit arm in arm with my friends and even then to me she was nothing else but purity. For me she always took a patronising attitude and wanted me to be good and gentle. I revolted and tried to act the other way, but she always intervened and I was powerless.

When I found that her power over me was increasing day to day I cut myself off completely for four years from that circle. There were other reasons too which made me leave my friends.

I could not separate her from me. She was always with me. It was she who kept me good and nothing else. I searched her end I found her. She had taken everything and still she

had given me happiness. I do not exist separately. I am one with her. Here it was the question of a comparative state of mind and I do not know how long it would exist.

During those years I could realise that it was not the beauty; it was not any of those good qualities which brought about that complete merging of two souls, minds, and hearts together. It was purity which was meant only for me and not for the world, which made me say from my inner-self that there was no difference between her and me. We were one. You may call it purity, divinity or something else.

There I saw in that face everything, where others were unable to see anything, which attracted and charmed me—which is a living memory for ever. It was not the question of time. First when I saw that face the impression was somewhat mixed. Later it got such a firm hold on me that it created a hungry yearning inside me so that I never wanted to lose the sight of it.

It is pure. There is no carnal desire in it. It is love, which the word itself can show, and nothing on the face of this earth can explain it.

The world might run her down that she is the worst possible type of creature that ever existed on the face of this earth, but I found

everything good in that face, and separately I do not exist.

It may be named Destiny. I saw something and lost myself of completely.

CHAPTER XXIV

It was on different occasions that I had been to the Continent and saw the most of it; but it is on account of some peculiar circumstances that there are only very few places which have left some remarkable impressions upon my mind. The observations might be superficial and the conclusions quite wrong; but I have tried to study them from the point of view of an impartial observer and I stayed there for a considerable length of time. I will tell you the whole thing in the form of a single tour instead of jumping from one place to another.

After a certain number of years I was so much used to English life that whenever I left London I felt quite out of place. But once on the move, a bit of acceleration and the gipsy in me would burst forth in its full form. Even in the strangest surroundings I was quite homely and was one with the people.

It was a beautiful evening and the Channel was very smooth. The cliffs of Dover, a familiar sight, when the distance between the coast and the steamer was becoming greater and greater, appeared simply fascinating. The colourful sky, the setting sun making a huge half circle and the passing steamers and boats making vain attempts to form an obstruction between that heavenly scene would have required all the talents of a genius to reproduce it exactly.

This time Sanath was with me. We understand each other perfectly. The company was jolly and the joy was great. At every moment and at every step we found fun and merriment.

Our company was to last only upto Oberammergau and from there we were to separate. The reason was that he was a hiker and I a tourist. He wanted to tramp the area between Oberammergau, Innsbruck and Munich, see things in his own way and then tell me about them. Besides he wanted to return early, because his Civil Service results were to be declared shortly and I had chalked out a long programme.

Our first real stop was at Munich. The experience that water was more expensive than beer was at Aachen. I asked for water and

Sanath for a lemon. Ordinary drinking water was not available and I was given a glass of bottled water. The total cost of our drinks was three marks, which at that time was equal to five shillings. If we had ordered two glasses of beer it would have cost us half a mark.

So we decided to drink nothing else but beer as long as we were to remain in Germany. In Bavaria people drank only beer. If somebody asked for water they would laugh or think there was something wrong with the person.

Our journey from Ostend to Cologne was during the night and we slept like two logs just to get up in the morning with a fine feeling. It was a beautiful day and the lovely and varied scenery kept us gazing all the time. Passing through the Rhine valley we reached Mannheim via Frankfurt. We stopped there for some time and had a look round.

After that break, we journeyed via stuttgart to Munich. I am not much of a nature lover otherwise the description of the wonderful things I saw would have been a book by itself. The train sometimes running by the side of the River, sometimes over the hills, under the bridges, beside the canals, castles, villages and everything being explained by different people

was too much for me to take in.

This was the time when Germany was undergoing a real revolution after 1870. The changing condition of the country seemed in the air itself and it was a peculiar feeling. This was the time when the socialist regime was overthrown. Dr. Bruning and his followers were removed from the face of this earth. Hitler had come to power. He was said to be ruling the country at the point of gun and removing everyone who had come in his way.

As I used to read in the British press, he got plenty of Jews shot dead in cold blood, banished practically the remainder and took by force all their worldly belongings. Perhaps it was all true, because those who gave the news were better judges and knew everything inside out.

But my impressions were different.

During the course of my tour, what to say of towns and villages, I saw even in front of a lonely hut, on the top of a hill the Swastika flag. Perhaps it was love, perhaps it was fear, I do not care what it was, but the spirit was there. Dead Germany a few years ago was brought back to life with a boiling blood. Whether the force which it is gathering, will be used for sinister or lofty motives is another

consideration. It is a statement of fact and not a conclusion.

Munich besides its beautiful beer gardens, English Park, monuments, and wonderful scenery is also a stronghold of Jews. Here I wanted to see something of the ill-treatment to the Jews. I went into the lanes, Jewish quarters, round the Synagogue, to find something interesting, but I was disappointed.

At that time Jews were required to carry a passport-like thing, in which was their photo indentifying them, and stating that they were the original inhabitants of Germany, meaning pre-war and not post-war residents. These pre-war residents had land and property like any other German and the restrictions were for the removal of later settlers.

No doubt it was a very humiliating treatment and no self-respecting Jew would have liked to remain under those intolerable conditions. The propaganda which they carried in places where they were powerful showed their unity and strength throughout the world. But the vile things which they said, laid bare the state of mind of a certain section.

They have so much money, power, and strength in other parts of the world that they could have transplanted all the Jews into other

lands as a protest. This would have won them a respect not only from the rest of the world but inwardly even from Germany.

The truth is that the pre-war residents are so much better off, that they do not want to leave the Fatherland and embark on a new adventure for the sake of the later invaders.

After the crushing of Germany, in the post-war period, there was the invasion of foreigners and the Jew were in the largest number. There Jews were so clever, rich and brainy persons that they were controlling many industries. They were to be found in every department of the Government and they were very powerful.

This showed their superiority, but at the same time a kind of hatred for them was growing throughout Germany. Whether this hatred was artificially created by unfair means or whether it was real I do not know. The causes of Semitic and Hun hatred have a very old historical background and they are too deep-rooted. At that time this was the state of affairs throughout Germany.

Any one who wants power has to remove all the opponents from the field. The socialists and Communists were in the way and they were removed. The same was the case with the Jews.

For the sake of a greater good, those who are at the top have to sacrifice many interests. What is a section or a handful of persons before a mighty nation? People will speak ill of them, propaganda will be carried against them, but still they will go on. If they sincerely believe in the cause nothing on the face of this earth can stop them. They will go on heedlessly until they have achieved their ideal or something near to it. When you analyse the psychology of these people, the factor of constancy is the greatest in them.

Leaving aside the extraneous causes, Hitler has read something about the racial history and he is the firm believer in the superiority of the Aryan race. Here comes the question of male obstinacy and the disregard of logic for the sake of establishment of one's own beliefs. In reality all races are equal. The only factors which come into play are the circumstances and the training of human mind.

From Munich we went to see the Passion Play at Oberammergau via Lindu and Marnu. At that time the main thought was the Play and nothing else. The family in which we were to stay was already arranged by our tourist agency. We reached the place in the morning. The date fixed for our seeing the show was the following one. Therefore we had a complete day at our

disposal.

After having a nice hot bath and a heavy breakfast we decided to do a bit of mountaineering. It took us more than two hours to reach the top. In the creeks there was a bit of ice here and there, but the scenery from the top was worth admiration.

The mountain tops appeared so close to one another that I felt like jumping from one top to the other. Plenty of villages scattered in the valleys appeared like toys, beauty below and mystery all around. I watched the scene for about ten minutes. Beauty is not the word; it was heavenly. I gazed and gazed, wanted to see what was beyond and felt like one with the place. A cold blast and steep hill on the other side sent a shudder through me and I decided to descend.

Coming down I noticed that it was a wonderful place for ski-ing, ski-jumping and ski-running. Even there were spots of ski-joring. What could be more fascinating than when during winter it is all snow and those healthy faces are enjoying to their heart's content?

Instead of getting straight into the village we took a turn and were in front of the theatre. To ward off plague and other evils the play was started in 1634 and since then according

to the vow, it has been performed every tenth year regularly. This is an example of unrestricted belief and strict adherence.

The next morning when we were in the theatre I marvelled at the size of it. It was so huge and yet so simple. I have seen bigger things like the Albert Hall and the national theatres of Berlin, Vienna, and Paris, but it was unique. It was open and yet it was a closed theatre.

As soon as the play started I was wondering whether I should be able to understand it or not. Before coming I had purchased an English Translation of the original book and had gone through it; therefore I had a pretty good idea of what was going to happen. Having the book open by my side and taking a cursory glance at the sentences made me feel that I perfectly understood the moods and expressions.

The acting was so superb and natural that it was matchless. There was nothing of that film star make-up and acquired polish. It was a stage and yet it was not a stage. There was pin-drop silence when the Play was going on. Even old women had forgotten their coughs and sneezes. The spectators seemed to have forgotten their existence till the Play closed for lunch, then every thing was noisy and in a

turmoil.

After lunch the Play continued and it lasted till five. For the time being I was carried back to the Biblical times. The tableaux were the exact representations of the Italian and Greek masterpieces. The well-set stage, fine scenery and acting was so natural that it left no place for criticism.

Every actor whether having a small or a big part was wonderful, but there were a few faces which could never be forgotten; and the most remarkable of them all were those of Alois Lang and Johanna Preisinger, both taking the part of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mother respectively.

The broad and furrowed forehead of Alois Lang, deep-set and shining brown eyes searching the inner-most depths of ones soul, tapering and long nose and well-shaped cheek bones showing the strength of character, thin and shapely lips having truth written on them, drooping moustache, and long beard covering his firm chin showed some of the remarkable characteristics of the man. His long and intelligent type of face was very impressive. His profile had a remarkable resemblance to the old paintings of Christ. The rough and wrinkled face showed pity and suffering but the

personality was so magnetic and charming that one could never be tired of his company. That deep and firm voice of his seemed to touch the innermost depths of one's heart and he could hold you spell-bound so long as he was speaking.

Johanna Presinger was a difficult character to describe, a charming and lovable girl in private life; but that sad look and pitiable expressionless face on the stage was beyond words. Her graceful neck, long hair which was neither brown nor gold, those big bulging and beautiful round eyes with long eyelashes and commanding eyebrows, thin and discreet lips, rosy face and fine cheeks, and her sweet voice made me stare at her again and again. She seemed to be a woman belonging to another world. While acting, the changing and controlled expressions upon her face were wonderful.

The quiet little village had assumed an international character. I have seen cosmopolitan cities; but never even heard of a cosmopolitan village. Oberammergau had become one for the time being. People of all nationalities from all parts of world could be seen there. All tongues and dialects could be heard. It was funny to see Yankees and Japs. roaming about in Bavarian. Costumes and speaking their

respective mother tongues. Big personalities of the world came and went away like other spectators and nobody took any notice of them. For four days daily I saw thousands of new faces arriving and leaving the village.

The villagers did all the work starting from that of a porter to the magistrate. They did all the catering and worked from early morning till late in the night. During the day the whole village took part in the Play. It was amazing to see how they managed everything so smoothly. Not only this, besides their busy time they had their gay moments too. In the evening the village pubs and beer houses were full. Folk dancing and Bavarian songs could be heard in plenty. A few of the foreigners could be seen in these places, otherwise they were so tired after sight-seeing, the Play and the preparation for their departure, that they hardly had any time left at their disposal for such things. These few newcomers who entered such places were made to join the chorus and the dances, and feel gay for the time being.

With these healthy, rosy, rustic and beautiful blonde people, females never using cosmetics and males never having their hair cut, living in natural surroundings, the village seemed a strange place different from the rest of world. The family with which I stayed was quite a big

one. The old gentleman had four sons and five daughters. His second eldest daughter was very witty, jovial, too smart and a well-mannered girl. She spoke good English and gave such smart and befitting answers that the visitors were at their wit's end. Besides the chorus she had quite a big part in the Play and still she seemed to be attending to all the guests at home.

When the performances of this Play come to an end, the village must be a quiet and romantic place. The inhabitants make toys, beads and other scriptural requirements and some do a bit of agriculture and lead a peaceful life.

Here I was sorry to leave the company of my friend Sanath; because he was such a good company and a wonderful fellow. I had intended to go straight to Switzerland, but Lindau was such a beautiful place that I could not help stopping there for some time. The small town situated on an island at the German end of Lake Constance and the train running over water right upto it gave me a delightful feeling.

Like me there were plenty of foreigners and the place was crowded. People swimming on the beach had made it appear like the Belgian

or Southern Coast of England. Tall trees at the foot of the mountains which were ice-covered even during summer, the still waters of the lake and train running round the coast for quite a good distance was all very picturesque.

This part of the country is in no way inferior to beautiful Switzerland. In fact it is Switzerland within the German territory, but there are none of those modern conveniences and the whole place is rustic. If I had time and money I would have liked to stay for a longer time in Bavaria and study the people there. In Switzerland I made Zurich my headquarters, and went on little tours in the surrounding area. My farthest point in the west was Interlaken and a small place called Appenzel in the eastern portion of the country. Switzerland is known for its beauty throughout the world. No words could describe it, just go and see. It is magnificent whether in summer or in winter.

Besides Interlaken, the places which I liked best are Lucern and the Grimsel and Furka glaciers near St. Gothard Pass. In Lucern you could never feel lonely, because there are people from all parts and all of them want company as much as you do. Lucern, besides its beauty is a gay place. You could keep occupied for twenty four hours if you wanted

to. Boating during the night in those still waters and lights all around is an unforgettable pleasure. The water circuses of Switzerland marking those colourful pictures by electricity on the water screen are a peculiarity.

Zurich being the place of my longest stop I was able to form friendship with two Swiss military Officials. They took me to one or two clubs and there the life was a bit different. Otherwise the whole of Switzerland appeared to me like a moving hotel where people catered for all your pleasures and pursuits and the inhabitants wanted to squeeze as much money as possible out of you. Even on a farm if you ordered something to eat, the farmer would expect a tip besides the usual price. Greed and servile type of attitude seemed to be developing among its people.

Grimsel and Furka glaciers with ice-cut caves living music, dancing and refreshments inside them, an artificially created lake which would supply the whole Switzerland with electricity, those zigzag roads where the motor car would take about six hours for going from one peak to the other, but a hiker might take only two hours by crossing the glacier, deep-cut valleys with waterfalls and streams below, high mountains above and the road in the middle, and electrically run lifts for reaching

inaccessible tops made available for man are the wonders of nature. Such are those places where you could keep marvelling at the majesty of nature and never be tired of it. What a place it would be, if the people could be as grand as the country is ?

CHAPTER XXV.

Vienna a city of million melodies had become a city of a million shells. It was only a few days after, when Dolfus was shot dead and the socialist flats were raised to the ground. Though everything had quieted down and there were no restrictions of movement, still the barbed wires were in existence.

At every corner the military was standing ready at hand against any kind of disturbance. A city of palaces and dreams before the war, when nights were happy and hearts were free and all joined in singing sweet melodies, had become a deserted and a desolate place. Even when everything had become normal it was only a caricature of its past glories.

All the palaces which were full and gay at one time were empty. Some of them like the Schonbrunn Palace, with their beautiful gardens and monuments, where it was not possible for

the ordinary public even to go near them, were open to each and everybody. Good-for-nothing offices were stuffed into others occupying a few rooms and the remaining portions were kept locked in order to impress the public that they contained something very valuable. —

During the day when I used to tramp the city I found worry written on the face of everybody and they were expecting trouble any moment. Everything was quiet and the atmosphere was gloomy. Even the statues of Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin and of other great masters of music seemed to be singing a death song. I was not in a mood to see the places like the University, museums and so on.

The only people who seemed gay were the cheap women on the streets trying to attract the foreigners; because they too were suffering and wanted to satisfy their wordly needs. Some fun might be found in places like the Grand and the Bristol Hotel, but there the major element was a foreign one. Even the dirty night clubs like the Mouline Rouge and the Fantasio were full of women and there was a scarcity of men.

Of course in the so-called exclusive night clubs on the Cobensal, a hill outside Vienna there was fun; but they were full of rich tourists and most of them were the Americans and the

English. There I felt as though I was enjoying in one of the night clubs in the West End; but when I came out on one of the open balconies the feeling was different. It was a clear night and the scene was simply charming. Vienna with its thousands of lights appeared like a piece of sky brought down to this vile earth, and the stars had become dim and pale because they were crying over their miserable plight and the stars from the sky seemed to be laughing from above.

At about midnight I decided to return. There was a sudden cloud-burst and the lights on the glittering streets in the city appeared to me, making queer reflections. There was a suspicious movement of people but the number of police was greater than the civilians. A shrill voice, firing of a few shots and a huge crowd seemed to have emerged from nowhere. I asked my taximan to take me as fast as he could to the hotel. In the morning I read in some paper that there was a little disturbance.

I had intended to stay only for a week, but I prolonged my stay for another three days. I liked wandering in the outskirts and watching the people—children bathing naked, women washing their clothes in the canal and homeless fellows satisfying their hunger with barley bread and cheap fruits. Some of them carried their

worldly belongings on their shoulders and they were so few in number that they never felt their burden. They even left them at some appointed place and were not afraid of their being lost.

The poverty in these areas was so glaring that it could be compared with any of the Eastern Cities. I was told that there was a shortage of accommodation even though when the people were prepared to pay a fair amount of rent, the big houses which were to let in the heart of the city were empty and big heads were trying to solve this puzzling problem.

The only place where I found some comfort and relief was the Prater. There I watched everything with childlike simplicity. There I found people with practically nothing in their pockets getting the best out of life. Every tent, every shop and every corner had a different tune and all of them sweet. There it was a place of many melodies and people seemed to enjoy themselves even in those troubled times. Those sky-high swings and roundabouts, electrically run toy trains going up and down with jerks in dark tunnels where you could sit with a stranger and feel gay and happy in that innocent merriment, while you could see in other tents those toy giants devouring the toy men and the representation of other fairyland stories, and

lastly have good and cheap food with dance and music that was the place where I went often and felt happy.

I went to see the beautiful shelled socialist flats. Australian Nazi troops were guarding the place and I was afraid that I might not be allowed to see them, but I was permitted on condition that I did not take any photographs. My guide had to remain behind and a man in plain clothes accompanied me. He gave me the impression that he did not understand English, but I could make out that he knew more than sufficient. I went round the place like a deaf and dumb creature with my eyes wide open. Some of the portions were still inhabited, but the inhabitants had so much of misery, suffering and gloom written on their faces that it was unbearable to see them. A few of them were stern faces too and they were prepared to go to any length for the cause in which they sincerely believed. It gave me such a depressive feeling that I left Vienna for Budapest a day earlier.

It was near about two hours' journey either by train or by bus and if I went by boat then the time taken was more than twelve hours. I was out to see things and the slower the rate of travel the better I was able to see the countries. I had to cross two frontiers, those of Austria and Czechoslovakia before getting into

Hungary.

After purchasing the tickets, when I got on the boat the police authorities wanted me to pay about a pound for my entry into the country. I had only twenty pangos and the rest of my money I had transferred to Budapest. With that amount I wanted to enjoy myself on the way. I tried to explain to them in English that they should give me back my passport which was in their custody, some one with money was going to see me in Budapest and I would not leave the boat without paying.

The languages which these police officers spoke were Hungarian and German. The only thing which one of them said in English was, "We Polleece (pointing a badge on his shoulder) money give passport, no money no passport."

All my efforts were fruitless and turning my face towards the river the only exclamation I gave was, "How I wish that some one could understand even a bit of English."

Instantaneously a hand went on my shoulder shaking me from head to foot and speaking in that perfect London tone, "Now, Now, do not lose your temper, sweet child. Everything is O. K. This Officer seems to be a nice chap. All he is trying to convey is that you should not be worried about the passport. The police

are taking the responsibility and it will be safe and sound. Nobody will stop your movements in Budapest, but within twenty four hours you must deposit the money at the police headquarters and take back your passport, otherwise you will be forced to leave the country and your passport will be returned to you."

After that he said something in German to that Police Officer who smiled, saluted and disappeared to some other part of the boat. I was staring at the stranger up and down, and down and up. He was so much sun-burnt that his appearance was even darker than mine. He was putting on the same type of sports jacket, flannels and the tie. He was much taller than me and he had blue eyes. We were so much alike that any one would have taken us for brothers if he did not scrutinise us minutely and that actually did happen a good many times in Budapest.

Before I could thank him, putting forward his hand he said, "Do not get confused. I suppose you are taking the degree in law which I obtained two years ago, and now I am attached to a firm of solicitors in Paris. I am on a month's leave and I suppose you too are enjoying your vacations."

Shaking him vigorously and pressing his hand with all my might, I said, "You do not

know how pleased I am to have met you."

"Oh ! I know, I know, but just mind my hand please. My name is Kenneth Oldman, Ken for short."

"I am called Ganesh and my other names are too long."

"And I do not want to know them."

"I have more than sufficient to pay for my entrance into the country; but I want to enjoy myself on the way."

"If it's the passport which is troubling you, I can pay for that and you need not be worried about it."

"Oh it's not that."

"Then cheer up."

The conversation continued for a few minutes and after talking about our mutual friends and acquaintances we became pretty good friends. I invited him to the bar and there we had some Tokay.

The only place where we stopped for a considerable length of time was Bratislava in Czechoslovakia which was formerly known as Pressburg under the German rule and Pozxony was its Hungarian name, I was told. It was a cradle of Hungarian Kings and some two hundred years back it supplied rulers to a good

number of mid. eastern European principalities. The town was a quaint one with its sloping streets, old churches, a beautiful castle on the top of the hill and the sealike Danube below. I could quite imagine what a romantic place it must have been before the advent of the railways.

The day was a fine one, with its cool breeze, intermittent showers, sometimes cloudy and sometimes sunshining. The fresh green land on both sides with its wheat and maize fields, and cattle, horses and sheep grazing in the open spaces was a soothing sight. Those little villages at small distances with their watermills where women and children waved in innocent fun attracted the attention of every foreigner.

The Blue Danube with its deep waters rolling along in a monotonous way seemed to be going to some unknown destination. The boat was gliding down the river slowly. The gipsy music, those Hungarian blonde girls with their tawny complexion which was neither fair, according to the European standard, nor the dark brown of the Orient, dancing their folk dances on the deck, Tokay and plenty of food made me feel as though I was moving in a dreamland.

The dream was once broken when at a small village a thin and long-haired shepherd-boy

came running on the boat with a thick black barley bread and paprika in one hand and a long stick in the other. He was just in time to catch the boat. Having made sure from the bag on his shoulder that he had brought whatever he wanted to, he took a sigh of relief.

He eased himself on a bench on the deck. Then he started devouring the bread with paprika in so big mouthfuls and with such a relish as though it contained all the delicacies of the world. After having satisfied his hunger he threw the remainder into the river. Took out some coin from his purse and had some wine at the bar.

For that much of time he was so self-centred that he did not feel the presence of any one around him. He had a look round, took out a flute like instrument from his bag and started playing some sweet tunes. People started gathering round him, and in a few minutes the whole crowd was singing and dancing to his tunes. The boy also with that happy glow in his eyes and sweet tunes on his lips was moving among the crowd. Again the picture of the dreamland was complete and we too started dancing.

In the evening when we were nearing Budapest the boat stopped near a village just at

sunset. A Greek architectural castle was on the eastern bank and the village on the western. The steps of the castle led right upto the river. The sun's rays playing on the waves were making golden red and shining reflections in such a way that it appeared as though the village and the castle were joined by some heavenly path. The way did not end there; but it continued through the trees right upto the sky where the clouds with their fantastic shapes and having all the colours of the rainbow seemed to be a part of another village just outside Heaven; and the sun itself with that cool red glow and a thin streak of dark cloud dividing it into two halves where you could stare at it for an unlimited time was like the gates leading right upto it. At that time my feeling was whether it could be possible for one to be one with nature.

Ken and myself stayed together. We were fixed up in such a nice hotel that so long as I was in Budapest I had no difficulty whatsoever of any kind. In the city itself I found that plenty of people knew English and the Britishers were very popular. The reasons of this popularity are the part which Britain took in the Versailles Treaty for making Hungary an independent country on the one hand, and the post-war British influences by giving financial and political help on the other.

The life there was wonderful so long as Ken was with me; because I did not see the other side of Budapest. Till then the only things I saw were the places like the Fishers Bastion, a mighty building with its historic church, and other historic associations, the Emperor's Palace-only those portions which were open to the public because most of it was occupied by the Regent, the castle on the top of the hill with beautiful walks and where military was stationed, the Hot Spring Baths where a kind of bluish warm water came out of the springs and where the people suffering from lumbago, gout and similar type of diseases went to get themselves cured. But it was a place only for rich people, because the doctors' fees, the patients' residence in the hotel on the springs themselves and different other costs made it unapproachable for the poorer public. Thousands of pounds have been spent to erect that grand place and somehow that amount must be recovered. The Magyar Houses of Parliament and that cute little island in the middle of the Danube just near the bridge at the upper end of the Houses of Parliament were also noteworthy.

On that island most of our time during the day was spent; because there were those public baths, sports grounds, a huge park, a big cafe having dance, music, beer and Tokay, and a

marvellous place for boating where at the narrower end we could have plenty of boating in those nice little boats. Our nights were reserved for places like the Hungaria and the Bristol Hotels, theatres, pictures, night clubs, or for open air dancing and motor-boating. During summer the important buildings in the city are floodlighted in order to attract the tourists and it is like a fairy land. While boating during the night in those still waters it appeared as though a grander and a more beautiful city was under the water.

One night Ken took me to open air restaurant on the top of a hill in the remote corner of the city. As usual we were in our dirty flannels and torn sports jackets. When we entered we found that the ladies were very well dressed and men were either in the evening clothes or putting on dark suits and ours was an incongruous company. Sheepishly we entered the place and occupied a table for two just near a corner; but our pockets were full and Ken was leaving the following morning. So we ordered the most expensive wines and unusual dishes like the games and paprika preparations.

A word was passed on by one of the waiters and the manager instantaneously came running up. Bowing in the most effusive fashion he addressed me, because I was the nearest,

"Glad, your highness, a - Maharaja with two princesses came only three nights back. May I have the honour of knowing the name of your highness."

Ken kicked me on the shin and before I could say anything he said in the gruff military voice "Is it necessary to give our names?"

Bowing again he said, "I understand, I understand, I am glad indeed. I will personally see that everything is very well done."

As soon as he was out of sight Ken said, "Look here Ganesh, be a sport, we are Incognitoes, though we might be any Tom, Dick and Harry. You have been a good friend and we might never see each other again. To-night I am feeling happy and gay. Let's empty our pockets to-night. You know the trick. Play the game."

I played the game and played it too well; because I was a master at it. I told the waiter to ask the Orchestra to play the Hungarian Rhapsody. The conductor with his violin came by our side, started playing the tune and conducted the Orchestra. Everyone was carried away by the music and as soon as it finished there was clapping for quite a long time. I asked Ken to tip the man with ten pangoes.

There were only two tables between us and

the cabaret and dancing floor. The head-waiter came and whispered something into the ears of the occupants of those two tables. They got up, smiled at us and occupied the tables at the other end. The tables and chairs in front of us were removed and space was created in such a fashion that the cabaret could come right upto us. I called the head-waiter and told him that he should not have done such a thing. He should go and apologise on our behalf telling them that he did that stupid act without our knowledge. I do not know what he said to those people, but after that we exchanged greetings.

The cabaret began and the girls came dancing right upto us. We were eating, drinking, joking and getting best out of life. Turn after turn brought something new before our eyes, and we enjoyed the show very much. Again I asked Ken to give those girls twenty pangoes so that they might have a drink on our account.

After paying the bills we tipped each and everybody heavily. Just outside the place an old beggar was standing and we emptied our pockets giving that man whatever we had. A waiter came running right upto us and asked whether we would like a conveyance. I showed my disapproval by a wave of hand and the man disappeared.

When we were left alone we did not care what the people behind thought of us. We left them guessing. The two penniless beggars were walking arm-in-arm in that full night and the world was nothing before them.

We tramped the distance of three miles in a sleepy condition to our hotel. I do not know how and when we reached the place and got into our beds. I got up at about ten in the morning only to find that Ken had left without even saying goodbye.

Left alone I started wandering in the surrounding districts. Outside the city, in the villages, excepting the difference in dress I found the same type of mud houses with thatched roofs, wheat and maize fields, vineyards, and orchards like some portions of northern India; but at that time people were expecting a famine and the whole of the countryside was in a state of panic.

Only the middle portion of Budapest just near the river has its pleasures, otherwise the place is very poor in comparison to other European cities. In the interior of the city haggard and hungry faces were prepared to do anything for the sake of a few pennies. Suffering, miserable and degraded young girls starting from the age of sixteen were selling

their skins to satisfy their worldly needs. One of them came to me and seeing that I was a foreigner she tried to convey her desire by gestures and one or two English words. I gave her two pangoes and continued my forward march. I heard her saying "Fool". So the fool returned to his hotel in a confused state of mind.

After meals I was in no mood to go out, so I came into the drawing room and throwing myself on a sofa started reading some old English paper. Not finding anything interesting I threw the paper in the direction of a chair just opposite me; because when I entered the room the chair was empty. When I looked up I found to my horror that a fresh blonde of about seventeen was sitting in it; but luckily the paper did not hit her and it was wide of the mark. I apologised for my absent mindedness and she smiled saying that it was quite alright.

Her laughing eyes conveyed that she wanted me not to stop; but to enter into a conversation. After the formal introduction I came to know that she had obtained her school leaving certificate and was coming directly from a convent in the provinces. Her parents were very rich and the proprietor of the hotel in which we were staying was a near relative of

hers. She expressed her desire indirectly that I should take her out that evening. We dressed up and went to Hotel Hungaria for dinner and dance. I found her an uncontrollable problem. The way in which she behaved showed that she never drank, but that evening she got tipsy much against my will. After that she was in her elements and very gay. It was a pleasure to dance with her. I took her out for boating and we returned early, because the responsibility was all mine.

I was lying in my room because I could not go to sleep. I was thinking that such were the moments when young people are led astray. If they fall into bad hands and if not strong enough, sometimes they repent for their folly all their lives. While I was in that chaste mood, lo there was a knock at my door.

"May I come in please."

"Just a minute, let me put on my dressing gown."

"That is alright, I do not mind if you have no objection," saying this she entered my room in her Pyjamas and sat by my side on the bed.

"What can I do for you?"

"I could not go to sleep and I felt like having a smoke. I had no match and seeing the lights in your room thought that I might be

able to find one."

I lit her cigarette and asked her when was she going to see her parents and how long was she going to stay in Budapest. She said that she was in no hurry and wanted to enjoy herself for sometime. Saying this she stretched herself on my bed and some part of her body was uncovered. That was the limit of provocation; but I do not know what had taken possession of me. I covered it up gently with her dressing gown.

Bang went a terrific blow near my right eye and I was stunned. The door too closed with a bang and the clattering sound of the slippers showed that somebody had run away. I followed her, but the door of her room was locked and I heard a loud sobbing inside it. All my efforts to get it opened were fruitless.

In the morning I found that I had a black-eye. At the breakfast table we were sitting facing each other, but not a word passed between us.

When I was about to leave the table she said, "I am going home this evening and I want you to come with me upto the sation.

"How can I come? I am also leaving for Prague by the night train."

"I am going south and your train leaves

two hours after mine. You can while away that much of time and you will have to come."

"I am not refusing but....."

"No buts please."

She did not say much but that entreating expression upon her face was too much for me. I said that I would accompany her upto the station. I got up with the idea of writing a few letters. When I looked back I found that she was chuckling. I looked into the mirror and my black eye was a bit better. I yawned and instead of writing letters, went to bed.

In the evening at the station she was happy and cheerful. She was humming a tune and murmuring something in Hungarian. We talked at random, but not a word was spoken about the happenings, of the previous evening.

When the train was about to move, she caught hold of me firmly and kissed me all over my face again and again. There was nothing of that passion or lust in it. I also felt as though I was mauled by my own sister. She stuffed a copy of the Strand Magazine into my hands which I thought she had purchased for herself. The train started moving. There was no time for words. I pushed her into the train and she shouted, "Goot-bye, I will be goot."

She was gone and I was on my way. What

to say of knowing her address, I did not know even her full name nor she mine. It was only a passing fantasy, but I am sure we had affected each other's life to a great extent. The glow and unforgettable memory of certain actions is such that you always feel happy whenever you ponder over them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The only charm which Prague has is that it is the capital of a newly created nation. The city itself with its narrow streets and dirty lanes did not appeal to me at all. If my travel were before the War I would have gone to some other place like Dresden or Leipzig. No doubt there were some places of interest like the Houses of Czech Parliament and the bridge with numerous statues. One of the statues a Jew is said to have insulted during the German and the Austrian regime by spitting on it and the punishment accorded to him was that he should lick the whole of it and cover it with gold. The other places to see were the historic church just near that bridge, the University and so on. But they were nothing in comparison to places in other great European capitals.

The wide street coming down from the station right upto the square is the only one which has some charm about it.

In reality it was the people who were worth knowing and studying. A race divided, suffering and suppressed found itself united, free and a newly created nation after the War. Immediately after the War if Czechoslovakia was mentioned, people were doubtful whether such a country did actually exist. To-day the Czechoslovakian products starting from pencil and paper, and ending in the most intricate type of machinery are to found all over the world.

It was through the courtesy of a very high official that I was able to see some portions of the Skoda Works. I was taken round only to those places where the by-products like cutlery, machinery and tools were manufactured. My scrutiny and keen interest made those people suspicious. What to say of showing me, they did not even mention about their main business, the arms and ammunition manufactures, but it appeared to me from certain other observations that the employment in that direction was increasing rapidly and the old employees were working overtime. These bee-like people were very busy in a greatly profitable employment, producing something cheap and selling it very dear-selling them to two fighting parties so that the belligerents might destroy each other and pay for their death to these clever people. It does not mean that the Czechs are

to blame in any way. Oh no !! If they would not, somebody else would; then why should not they take the advantage? The most needy at that time appeared to be the Central and South American Republics, Abyssinia, China and Spain.

Besides the Industrial-Exhibition some international political conference was also going on and the political representatives from different countries had assembled there to achieve their own ends. In the hotel in which I was staying one of them had taken a suite just opposite my room. One morning when he was coming down he slipped and was about to roll down the steps; but I caught hold of him in time. We had our breakfast together and gradually we became friends. Our mutual liking was so much that besides the business for which he had come most of our time was spent together.

One afternoon while we were having our tea he said, "I could take you to a place where you could never dream of going, not at least in Progue."

"Which is that place?"

"But you will have to do something in return."

"Then out with the price."

"A night in the night-club."

"That I could have done for nothing."

"Do not talk rot. You do not know the place. It is next to impossible for you."

"Wait and see."

I called one of the waiters tipped him with ten Kroners, and asked him to get me a list of a few night-clubs with their addresses and full details.

After ten minutes the waiter returned with a slip of paper, "Sir, here are five names which the manager considers best, though a bit expensive."

"Thank the Manager on my behalf."

"Very well sir, thank you, sir."

Turning to my friend, "Now you know that it is not an impossibility."

"Well I must say you have some tact and presence of mind."

"What about the place, which is beyond my reach."

"Come with me upstairs."

I followed him into his room, there he showed me a letter from some very high official inviting for dinner to some political club, but the wonder of it was that it contained my name as well. I stared at it.

"What is the meaning of all this?"

"It's plain enough, I have told this gentleman about you, my interesting friend. So he has invited both of us. Now the responsibility is mine to see that you accompany me. The place where we are going is meant only for a chosen few, and anyone else would give anything even to have a look round. There those who are ruling the country assemble in the evening in order to exchange their views in an informal fashion and have a good time. Ambassadors and political representatives from different countries are invited there so that they might get out of them something advantageous for their country. The building might be changed and the country might be turned from a Republic to a Kingdom or a Fascist state, but those who are at the top must assemble at some place. One who is at the top is the honorary president of that club."

"I must say it will be a new experience for me."

"Well then hurry up and get ready. We have to be there at seven thirty sharp."

At the club our host was waiting for us enthusiastically. After the formal introduction from the talk it appeared that he knew quite a good bit about me and I knew who was res-

possible for this. Our host was a great scholar. He had more than sufficient book knowledge concerning political, economical, military and tactical conditions of my country; but he wanted to have first hand information concerning the military and other things. The printed facts and figures never show the actual state of affairs behind the scenes and the technical interpretations are too difficult for a layman.

Before dinner he had taken me round that gigantic place showing me those rare beautiful glass works, paintings of some great masters and introducing me to people of international importance. He thought that it should make me feel elated and have some far-reaching psychological influences. When we were having our dinner money, was no consideration. Rarest types of wines and dishes which I had never tasted were brought before us.

My friend was thrown in the background. The glaring and deep-set searching eyes of my learned host seemed to say, "I will get out of you whatever I want." His thrusting, persuasive and flattering questions were in such a form that there could only be one answer, but perhaps the wine or some fancy mood of mine made me extra careful and I did not want to get mixed up in any way. There might be

troubles ahead. To all his questions there was always an evasive answer or a question in return. This aroused the curiosity of the man and he stuck to me like a leech.

I was in my elements and I thought that instead of he getting something out of me, why should not I try to unearth something. His serious stare instead of frightening me was so amusing that I returned it with a smile. One thing I found out that whenever I praised his country and said something about their wonderful achievements, his face would become red with pride, the glow in his eyes would almost amount to a flame and he would bubble out a good many things to corroborate my statements. So the best course for me was to keep him occupied with the subject on which he was most sensitive.

I said, "Do you know what becomes when philosophers and scholars rule a country."

"Do I know!! I am one of them and we are ruling the nation. See the results when philosophers and scholars are ruling a country."

"No doubt the remarkable achievements of your people are second to none. The upgrade advancement is of such a type that every one of them appears to be prepared to go to any length for the sake of the country. If this were

the rate of zeal and dexterity of your people, then in a few years' time yours would be a wonderful place to live in; but you are sandwiched between two hostile neighbours and remember that only a few years back they were your rulers."

"Remember !! Can I ever forget? I have had a horrid experience and my life itself has been a hell of suffering. We know our strength and we are not afraid of them. Where there is a will there is a way. In a few years' time our military strength will in no way be inferior to our neighbours'. You must remember one more thing that sometimes the brain of one man is more powerful than a nation."

"I know you have brought a dead language to life and within a limited time Czech might be the only language spoken by the people; but to-day you must remember more than half the population speaks German and you have some real German population within your boundaries. What would be the consequences if the Nazis and Fascists predominate in Europe?"

"Czech is the only word we know and we will see that such situation never arises."

Like that conversation was becoming interesting; but my friend stepped on my foot and I knew the meaning.

I got up and said, "It's very late and I must be leaving. Thank you very much for enlightening me. The things which you have said are very useful."

That sent kind of electric current through the man, knowing that he was talking to a man whom he did not know at all. He got up with a quick shiver and shaking hands he said, "Must you leave? Is not so very late."

"We are going somewhere else. We will have a talk some other time."

"You are very nice. Come and have lunch with me to-morrow, yes."

"Thanks for the invitation but at that time I will be in the Industrial Exhibition."

"Then I will ring you up to-morrow afternoon, say at five."

On the way my friend said that this kind of talk would get me into trouble some day. Next morning I found that two fellows were watching my movements even in the hotel. At the Industrial Exhibition instead of the usual guide with a badge I got a special one. Merchants wanted me to give them the name of the firm I was representing. Two local press photographers wanted to take my photograph and make a statement, but I put my arms right across my face and told my guide that I was

nobody of any importance and they should leave me alone. He went and said something to them in Czech and I was left undisturbed.

The telephone bell rang at the appointed time and the voice from the other end said, "Hallo, how did you like our Industrial Exhibition?"

"Oh, it was wonderful."

"Day after to-morrow I am giving a garden party at my villa. Different types of people will be there and I do want you to come."

"But I am leaving for Berlin to-night."

"Can you not postpone it for two days? Send a wire or some such thing. It would have been nice to have you. I had arranged it for you."

"Thank you so much. I should have liked to stay but I am sorry."

"You had mentioned that you would be returning to Prague very shortly."

"Yes, I might come this winter."

"Then come and stay with us. We have a lovely little country house in Susice. It is a beautiful place for ski-ing and skating."

"It is nice of you indeed. I will let you know."

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye and good luck."

It was not so much of a good luck. Until I was out of the borders of Czechoslovakia I had a horrid fear that somebody was shadowing me.

At Berlin my friend's mother and sister were waiting for me at the Charlottenburg station. There I stayed for more than ten weeks and I would have stayed for a longer time if I could afford it. It is a beautiful city with its very wide streets and well laid plan towards Charlottenburg and Potsdam side. Kurfurstendamm with its separate tracks for trams, cycles, motor cars, pavements on either side and four rows of trees is the finest street I have ever seen.

A Berliner is never tired of boasting about his Reichstag; but at that time the only thing I could see was a burnt building from a distance. The Police and the Nazi Troops had surrounded it and it did present a ghastly appearance. The political upheaval and dangerous situation had made Berlin not a safe place to live in. Of course every effort was made to make the city look as normal as possible. Places of interest like the Dome, Charlottenburg Castle, Royal Exchange, Stock Exchange, National galleries and museums were kept open to the public. But

still there was a suspicious movement of people starting from Wilhelmstrasse, the area near the Dome, and ending in Potsdam via Brandenburg Gate. Every German moving about seemed to be having a pain in the neck. I did read about the shooting, arrests and concentration camps; but never had the opportunity of seeing one.

The guides take the tourists only to the beautiful places and the lucid and polite fashion in which they explain things is unique. The power of Kaiser; the glories of Potsdam, and the beauty of Sans Souci with its halls of richly decked stones, innumerable steps, glass-houses, big lawns and miles of gardens are things of pride for these people. In the Church of Potsdam they would explain how Hitler came and took the oath of allegiance from his ministers, how the Swastika flags were brought into the National colours and why they predominate. Then on the way back they would show the huge grounds for military parades, the Hitler Square and the high tower. The area from Potsdam to Wilhelmstrasse is really wonderful.

One week, two weeks, say a month for those beautiful places; but after that I started tramping the area between Lubben, Brandenburg and Finow. Here I was able to see something of Germany and the real Germans. In private life, their general behaviour was untouched by

politics. I found them good-people of simple and homely manners, but of stern discipline and a proud stock.

Here I am reminded of the words of a great traveller and a man whose words are said to be of some value. When on one occasion he had lost a few marks and his handkerchief in a street in Berlin he is said to have remarked "So this is Germany." To me however the impressions were different. It does not require a life time to make some general observations. Fellow-feeling, human sympathy and general characteristics can be known within a very short time. I leave you to decide. Here is one of the many experiences which I had to undergo in the villages and the outskirts of Berlin. One evening I lost my way near Finow. I got into a wayside pub and requested the owner, a fat old gentleman, to put me on the right path. He called his wife and asked her to look after the place. He came out and I thought he would just direct me from the bend, but he accompanied me upto the crossing, a distance of more than half a mile, against all my protests. I wanted to pay him something for the trouble he took for me. Instead of getting annoyed he smiled and said that I could make a better use of that money. He took me into the pub at the crossing, jested with the folks there, sat

on their table and asked me to join them. They were a happy and a gay lot. He ordered some lager and did not allow me to pay for it. Knowing the feelings of the man I acted according to his wishes. After some fun he put me on the road and said that it would take me direct to the station.

In the districts the poorer people seemed to be unaffected by the momentous happenings around them. They would sit in front of their shops or houses, play cards or some other game and talk about their daily local affairs. *The only thing which they felt was that everything* was becoming too expensive and they were finding life very hard. There were other things too; but of them they were the silent observers and not talkers.

The standard of living was falling very rapidly. The workers thought that they were getting very little after toiling all day long. Barley bread with vegetables was their main diet, and a meat dish was a rarity. Somehow the idea that they were no longer under the foreign oppression was a consolation.

A large number of people do hate the present state of affairs, but they are not in majority and their ideas do not coincide with those of Hitler. In the city I was taken to a few of the social and political clubs by the

brothers of my friend. There the members did talk about certain things, but it was that far and no further. The Nazi fever and fear have spread side by side with such force that they have a firm hold over everything and nothing has remained unaffected.

Most of the younger generation hated the practically compulsory military training, but there was no go. Persons between the ages of eighteen to forty-five, if they had no previous military training or if they were not connected with any military organisation, had to go through the full course. The whole of the country has become an organised camp ready for action at any moment.

On my way to Brussels via Hanover, Essen and Dusseldorf I found the iron and steel factories working with full force and the Krupps were having a roaring business. The civil aviation clubs were being militarised and the whole organisation was standardised in such a form that everything could be converted for military use without a moment's notice. The country is gathering the mechanical force in geometrical progression. The Kaiser's power is nothing in comparison to that of the present ruler. How these energies will be directed is a thing which will be seen in the near future.

A remarkable good has come out of the present regime as far as Berlin is concerned. The whole of the city has been cleaned of the dirty and filthy mess. At every corner and at every step painted, haggard and dissipated faces used to make all sorts of signs to every passer-by. The moral and mental attitude of the younger generation was sinking lower and lower. With one stroke he has removed everything. Now the places like the Famina are as good as any respectable place has a right to be.

The sincerity and hospitality which I found in the family in which I stayed is beyond expression. So long as I was there every member of the family wanted to keep me in a happy mood. The elder brother of my friend had a motor boat. Besides the pleasure in the lakes, the long trips which we used to take showed me a good many things, which it would not have been possible for me to see in any other way.

Even in those troubled times, the morning on which I left Berlin, the whole family with a host of other friends came to see me off at the station. The flowers and the presents were the tokens of their friendship; but one thing touched me most. I did not know that the next stop was Charlottenburg and the houses of my friends were in that area. All of them instead

of going to their respective business took the underground electric train to Charlottenburg and were waiting with more flowers for me on the platform.

Two catlike eyes were watching all these happenings with a keen interest and when the train left the possessor of those eyes remarked, "Just now you must be feeling more than Hitler."

Instead of answering, I gave him a contemptible stare and sank into my seat.

What is power before selfless and pure love ?

Some gay birds have called Brussels the Little Paris and if a viewpoint is worth consideration I think it is one; but even the Latin quarters of Paris are not so dirty as its narrow streets and impassable lanes having all the dirt and rubbish accumulated in the middle of them for the sweepers to pick that up.

Belgians appeared to me a peculiar race, somewhat akin to the French, women having strong and healthy look and men thin, emaciated and of ill-dressed appearance. They have learnt one thing and that is to grab as much as possible, not only from others but amongst themselves as well.

It is a nation which has learnt that the

neighbours should protect it for the sake of their own safety. There that spirit of self-reliance is dwindling. What would become if the powers of the neighbours on whom so much dependence is placed becomes equally weak? The power of these neighbours is so much that they seem to have a mighty influence even in the internal government of the country.

Leaving aside the other industrial towns like Ghent and Bruges, the country inside is very picturesque. The horticulture carried on within the country is a great source of income. The miles of richly coloured flowers on both sides of canals were like a picture of the supposed fairyland.

I was told that the rich pigmentation of the flowers was best obtained by the manure of flesh and blood, and I think Belgium had enough of it to last for years to come. The blood-red poppies and miles of graveyards are reminders of the human sufferings of a few years back. Those newly built houses in the villages might have led one to think what a beautiful country it was. For those new things the price in the form of flesh and blood is unimaginable. Besides those horrid monuments side by side could frustrate any beautiful picture.

When I went to Waterloo, I wondered

how many times those undulating plains must have been battle grounds, how many times villages must have been destroyed, how many times they must have sprung up, and how many times the ground must have been drenched with the blood of numberless people. There in the Napoleon's Dome the representation of the whole Battle of Waterloo on the canvas could make any one's mind run amuck and make him think about the man, once at whose feet was the whole of Europe.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I have no particular liking for the so-called politics; but once again in London and back to old normal life, I was taken by my friends to a few of the public and private meetings. Sometimes I was interested but often the interest was the audience and not the subject. Those peculiar species of humanity with different aims, ideas and motives had gathered there quarrelling, haggling, asserting their own point of view and serving no useful purpose. Sometimes there were persons whose words did matter and from them you could form a pretty good idea about the future course of events. Something useful and valuable could be gathered; but often these gatherings were so boring and those who came to speak were such good-for-nothing, bogus bugs that I felt sorry having wasted my time in such a useless pursuit.

One evening some gentleman possessing the shining name of Foortur Joker, representing the

Bound Tutelage Confirmation, the head of Boobycal Party a mighty creation, and guide of the destinies of Bindia was going to enlighten the poor students on the intricate problem of Tutelage. He would explain how they would become greater slaves and how the master would direct and he be an efficient instrument in working that great machinery, what were the difficulties which these mighty individuals will have to face and how they were going to overcome them.

What a grand theme and what a splendid solver !! He was going to give firsthand information about the great changes, because he was in the thick of them and everything depended upon his final word. If I had not been to this political meeting I should have missed the chance of a life time.

This great scholarly lecture was in a theatre. The theatre was filled with an international gathering because a great gentleman from Bindia was going to speak that evening and moreover he was the head of the Boobycal Party. In a good many countries a large amount of population did represent the Boobycal Party therefore, those who had come had the same notion about Bindia as well.

He spoke fervently and with all the spirit

of a great speaker. He explained the merits and good qualities of tutelage and the knotty and puzzling problems ahead in bringing the Bindians under greater bondage. He held the audience spell-bound and they looked at him with wonder and astonishment. He explained how he was loved and liked by the people, how the millions of Bindians waited with open arms to receive him on his return to Bindia. They asked him what he had brought for them and he told them to have some patience; because the fruit of patience was always a sweet one.

He was cunning and crafty enough to play upon the sentiments of those stupid and skunky Bindians who had crowded the place. He said that he and his contemporaries were getting old. They would have to retire. The younger generation and specially those who were in front of him, with all their knowledge, learning, respect and the great national spirit in them, were the guiders of the future destinies of Bindia in some capacity or the other. Their chests went two inches high and their body became so stiff as though there was a pain in their neck. All those jingling idiots looked round with an air of importance if those who were present there appreciated their greatness. They felt so elated and flattered that if all the education, man-

ners, and the presence of foreigners had not prevented them, they would have kissed the feet of the man in reverence.

One thing was sure that they would act according to his wishes at least for the time being, and they did so. They asked him intelligent and intricate questions regarding the Biblical representation of the Communities for frustration in Bindia, whether the upper house should have a gold-plated room and the lower house a silver-plated one, or whether they should be of the same material and how the tutelage constitution would be framed. He praised them for their intelligent questions, their far-sightedness and assured them of their shining future.

Foortur thought he had handled the meeting in a masterly fashion, and appeared happy over his evening's achievement. Some agitated and broken sentences were spoken by a Semylonese student suggesting that he should go back and that there was no use of his talking that nonsense. After that the student left the theatre in disgust.

On that the gentleman smiled, took up a paternal attitude and said, "I like the spirit of the boy. He has some stuff in him. If put on the right path and taught properly he would be very useful in future. Some such stupid remarks do occur due to ignorance. The boy is not a

Bindian. He does not understand the Bindians and the Bindian conditions. If he had known even a little bit about the great difficulties which we are facing he would not have made those idiotic remarks. It is a very dangerous and critical time for us. We are walking on a sword-edge and we do not know which side we may fall."

During the course of his lecture some true remarks were made here and there about the gentleman.

"He is a fine actor."

"He will do well in the films."

"I think he might have a chance in Hollywood."

"Look at the truth personified ! !"

"He is putting his hands in his pockets and will distribute some money to the poor Bindians."

"Lo, he is putting his hand on his chest and after finishing the glass of water he is going to say, "Strike here, Brutus, Antonio is ready."

He pretended not have heard some of these remarks and at others he smiled raising his nose, waving his hand and then pronouncing the word 'childish.' He liked that people appreciated his other qualities too. In case something happened to his political career he knew, where

to go and what to do.

Foortur looked at his watch and said, "There are only fifteen minutes left from the allotted time. Are there any more questions?"

All this time a thin and stunted Bindian student was sitting in a corner by the side of an elderly lady controlling all his passions and rubbing his hands in anger while all the blood rushing to his face showed contempt for the man on the stage.

But in the end, looking at the triumphant face of the man, he could control himself no longer and said, "Mr. Foortur Joker, you are wasting your time. Not only you are deceiving the poor Bindians; you are also cheating your own conscience. What are you? nothing but a mere creation of the Press. The Master has made you so, because you are a hypocrite and a useful instrument. The day you act against the Master you would be kicked out with a black name and a black eye. What is the use of telling this bunch of lies and misrepresenting facts before these foreigners? You represent nobody but yourself and the non-existent Boobyical Party.

"You say that millions of Bindians were waiting with open arms to receive you. Yes, they were, but their arms were full of black

flags and stones and their aim was such that they would never have missed. You took shelter by running into lanes and back streets until you were deposited in a safe hole. They knew that it is the likes of you who are keeping them slaves and they hate you. It would take some time for the Press to create the likes of you and the greatest service you will be doing is to go back."

Foortur never expected this outburst when everything had come to a triumphant end. He was sorry to have given that chance but it was too late and he must make the best out of a bad bargain. He was trembling with rage, the nerves on his face were swollen and the bad blood rushing into them had given a blue-black appearance, his normal eyes had become blood-shot and it seemed that they would burst forth from their sockets, and the water which he had swallowed only a few moments ago was oozing out of his mouth. If it was Bindia he would have got the fellow locked up for disorderly behaviour.

Shaking a piece of paper in his trembling hand which made its motions quicker still he shouted, "If I give you in writing that I will go, do you take the guarantee that nobody else would come."

"What a question and what a remark ! If I had that power then Bindia would have been a different country."

By this time the whole theatre was in a turmoil and the Bindians from different corners were shouting.

"Shame. Shame."

"Pull him down."

"Disgraceful, a Bindian running down a Bindian before the foreigners."

"A Judas among the noble order of Bindian slaves."

"Only questions and not irrelevant shouting."

"Shut up!!! Truth must be told and let him have his say," shouted the foreigners.

In all this hubbub Foortur waved his hand asking the others to be quiet and shouted, "Here I am doing some service. What shall I do if I go back."

"Act" shouted one from the audience.

"Enjoy and get fat on the funds collected from the poor Bindian farmers," interposed the other.

Similar other remarks were heaped from all sides. The Bindian youth was trembling too and all the blood rushing to his face showed

that he was agitated. All this time the elderly lady by his side was pulling his coat and whispering to him to sit down; but he looked at her in such a way that she did not interfere any further.

For the time being he seemed to have mastery over himself and said, "I believe in some concrete good and real service to the country. Abstract ideas do not hold any charm for me. I do not believe in the Evil Obedience Booment, but if you have nothing better to do you might join that.

After this the youth sat down quietly. It was many minutes past the allotted time. Foortur forgot that for the time being. He was on the platform. The last remark of the student and he took him right and left. He knew jolly well that the fellow would not get a chance to reply.

First he put the Evil Obedience Booment on a very high pedestal. Said that it was a weapon for gods and he was only a human being. Then told about the greatness of the people who were in it. Said why does not the fellow who wants me to join the Booment, go back to Bindia and join it himself. He is spoiling his father's hard-earned money, wasting his time and talking all this stupid nonsense.

When he was sure that he had abused the youth to his heart's content, and had after all that exposure, thoroughly vindicated his honour and completely crushed the student, he took a sigh of relief and declared the meeting closed.

When everybody was getting out of the theatre, some Bindian students, the guiders of future destinies of Bindia, possessing some famous names like Haru, Joker, Khokhu, Motu, and Raotu rushed towards the stage to meet that great personality and tell him that they were in some way or the other related to those famous people. Foortur got down from the stage and then the students formed a ring round him, but he did not pay any attention. He rushed to that thin stunted and poor Bindian, who was the cause of all annoyance, and who was trying to get out of the theatre with that elderly lady who was sitting by his side. He reached him just in time and said, "What's your name, young man?"

'I am called Chose Ghoul.'

"I am pleased to have met you. I suppose you are the son of the famous Ghoul, the great immoralist, the all-Bindia figure and I am proud to say one of my best friends; but what a contrast between the father and the son !! I am sure when he hears about your activities, and

knows that you are going on a wrong path, he will call you back."

"I am sorry to let you know that I do not have that honour though I possess that august name. Mr. Foortur Joker, you grossly misrepresented my statements and made some false remarks about me."

"Public life is different from private life. We are friends. No hurt feelings. Come and see me some other time. I am here for a week."

"Thank you, but I am going out of London for some time."

While getting out of the theatre the youth muttered to himself, "What a man!! He confesses that he is playing a double-faced role."

After this Foortur was surrounded by those boys. All of them started running down Chose with one voice. They said that he was a cracked crank. He was a gloomy and morose noodle, who never took part in politics, did not understand anything and they were sorry for his mad outburst. They asked him whether he had seen their parents. How they were? When he returns he should tell them how splendidly their progress was upgrade. They were becoming model slaves and would surely find their way to climb up by some illegal

means. He assured them that he would convey the news.

Chosé Ghoul was really a ghoul who could be found in the most unexpected places and could never be traced in the most ordinary ones. He was in the Feast Bindia Abomination, a most selected order of masters where one or two obedient, worthy, but dishonourable slaves might be admitted and which is the real power behind the scenes, which guides the destinies of mighty Bindia. The present and past masters are its members. Though it indirectly makes suggestions to the present masters, but they are implied orders. They are promptly obeyed by being converted into immediate laws.

The past and present kings and emperors were the only ones who could be found there. The bald, old and hard-boiled eggs who could ever be trusted for anything on the face of this earth assembled there to think about the future policy. One of the present kings was called to explain regarding the high-handed and unauthoritative action which he took in giving a more freedom of movement to the slaves.

He explained to them that they would be in a better position to serve them well. In the end they agreed, but reluctantly, because they were conservative in their habits and did not

like any change. The masters thought, if those slaves would become healthier they might be more active and instead of thinking stupid things they might be a source of trouble. So long as they were starved, stunted, and weak they could never be troublesome.

After considering the whole matter carefully the masters did come to the conclusion that he had acted wisely and they approved of his action. In the very near future they wanted the slaves to fight for them. If stronger and healthier, they would be able to put up a better show and less expense to the owners.

That particular meeting was strictly a private and confidential one; but somehow Chose had managed to smuggle himself in. He had squeezed himself in between two big masters and appeared like a dwarf between two giants. I knew one of the influential masters and that evening we were to go together to a party; but before that he had to attend the meeting which he could not possibly avoid. He went in to attend the meeting and made me sit outside.

Only a few minutes after I was called in. Perhaps the reason of my being called in was that the gentleman thought it would be boring for me to sit outside; besides etiquette did not demand that I should be left alone like that. He

must have asked others whether it was advisable to have me in. I was a harmless type of a bloke who was not interested in politics and went my own way. I found a chair vacant just near the door. Having made myself comfortable I could gather the above things after a few minutes of observation.

One of the old masters who was a king of a mountainous and remote region of Bindia at the beginning of the twentieth century hated all this and said, "Gentlemen, I have been a king for twenty long years and I am speaking from personal experience. I have come across all type of slaves starting from the aboriginal to the most civilised type. I have studied them carefully, I know how to deal with the individual types and then the country as a whole. The only way in which they could be kept under perfect control is by giving them little to eat and making them jump by means of a whip. All this bunk about Bound Tutelage Confirmation and advancement will lead you to ruin and you will lose Bindia."

"But the times have changed, circumstances have altered and if we do not act the way which we are acting we would lose Bindia this very minute, "interposed one of the present kings.

"No !! We would not. It is the likes of you who think like that. We are the soldiers. We have fought for it for ages and we are not going to give it up so easily. All this richness and prosperity here is due to our fight. There is that intelligentsia of slaves which has organised itself. It is selfish, corrupt, and rotten to the core. It wants to take some power from the masters in order to rule, harass, suppress and squeeze the half-naked, uneducated slaves from the countryside who do not know how to speak. We are not going to sit with folded hands; lose Bindia by inches and then say 'what can we do ?' We are going to fight with all our might and then if we lose, we give it up like a valiant soldier."

I liked his spirit. Like an honest and plain-speaking man he blurted out his real sentiments. Any master who was not a traitor to his cause and was true to his conservative traditional spirit, would have said the same. It was not that he was saying those things just for the sake of saying them; but he imagined them to be platitudes. That state of mind in him was created by his early education and later by the upper strata of the hierarchy of slaves. They took him to the uneducated jungle tribes and said that, that was their real self. They put their heads at his feet and agreed unanimously that

his words were those of the gods.

He roamed about puffed up and ruled like Nero without knowing the real state of affairs. After his return and after a lapse of a few years when he found the slaves sitting by his side he was indignant. He could not understand why his successors acted in such a stupid fashion. Though all his statements were false and baseless, he could not be blamed for that.

The other interesting speaker was a slave, a military type of a skunk with an idiotic expression upon his face. He was the model of slavery and for that alone and nothing else he was made an honorary king. The real power was a master but that was the highest honour which a slave could ever aspire to in his life. That example served as an inspiration to the whole order of slavery to serve the masters well and truly. Some analogy might be found to the Mogul order of slaves under modern conditions.

He said, "The powers which you masters are giving us by this Confirmation is the greatest mistake. We will fight like cats and dogs for our selfish interests. Everything will be in disorder and turmoil. The only thing we need is a strong whip. If the masters have forgotten its use, give us and we will make a better use."

of it under your direction. Running the Government is just like working delicate and intricate machinery. This act would mean putting big clogs into it and destroying the whole of it.

"I request you with folded hands not to commit this folly. Take a little example of admitting women into the government. What an abominable idea !!! Only cheap and loose women will come into and the places which are more sacred to us than the temples of gods and pollute and desecrate them, the places which we have been trying all our lives to enter. Purdah is the only place where good and useful women are found. Therefore good women would not be coming to such places. Purdah is the only place where we could commit all sorts of debauchery, crime, keep them worse than slaves, and still call ourselves honest good people. That is the place where we practise, teach and are taught slavery. Disturbing that means disrupting the whole machinery to its very foundations."

The masters stared at him. They wondered if it could be possible for any species of humanity to say such things about one's own kind; but at the same time, they admired the spirit of subservience in the man. They knew that his abominably hated mis-statements were such that even they would have thought twice before

pronouncing them.

All this time Chose Ghoul was sitting like a red-faced monkey, boiling with rage and rubbing his palms in such a fashion that if it was in his power he would scratch the face of the second speaker to such an extent that it could no longer be called a human face. He asked the president with an agitated voice whether he could be allowed to speak a few sentences. Though he was an intruder, he was permitted to do so.

Chose said, "The first speaker is just like a man who was taken blind-folded to a very rich and prosperous country. There he was placed in a castle and surrounded by degenerated and corrupt slaves who praised him and never gave him a chance to see. Sometimes he was taken to the mountains to see the half-naked hunters for amusement's sake. After being made to live like that he was brought back to his own country. Later if somebody told him that it was a beautiful country, where lived good honest farmers in the plains, who toiled all day long and were kept under oppression by the fellows round him, that they were groaning and suffering to such an extent that they would annihilate everything and construct a society beautiful and wonderful, he would deny all these statements and call the man a liar. Let

him go once again and see things unaided. That will open his eyes.

"Coming to the second speaker, I do not know what he was talking about. His bubbling about Purdah well, it does not exist in many parts. It may be said that it does not exist in the country as a whole. It may be in some classes in the upper portions; but what percentage do they form of the population as a whole? I suppose, according to him, those are the chosen few of the masters. For his mad outburst I have one word which I had better not say."

Saying this he disappeared. The honorary king was glaring like a stunned donkey. Others were clapping and wanted to know who the boy was; but Chose had vanished like a ghoul for ever as far as I was concerned, because that was the last I saw of him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Before I sailed for India, I met a queer girl whose reflections I would not like to leave out. She was born in India of English parents. Her father was a Colonel in the Indian Army. First twenty years of her life, she had spent in India. She had tried to study the inner Indian life from her early childhood.

In England she was a red-hot socialist and thoroughly Indian. She fought for Indian freedom. She would fight if the Indians were not admitted into clubs, hotels, private meetings or into any other place if there was a question of the colour-bar. She was always surrounded by the Socialists, Communists and Indians.

I do not know why, I liked her, but I always avoided her. Whenever I saw her coming with her retinue, I went the other way, fearing that there might be an occasion, when we might get introduced, and then I might become one of her

crowd. Due to my secluded and reserved nature, she also was anxious to know me.

She was a ravishing creature, a lizard-like woman with fine features, having a tuft of black hair and possessing dark brown eyes. Her beauty was more than sufficient to attract plenty of followers. That was the only reason which made a good many English boys to join her rank and file. They cared two hoots about her political opinions.

An Irish boy was her bitterest opponent. He was a die-hard conservative and was not afraid of saying that she was a mad cat. He was tall, sporty and a handsome fellow. He was the only one who never talked to her, excepting the discussions in the political meetings. He belonged to an aristocratic Ulster family and his father was an important financier in London.

In all the College mock-parliaments, it was interesting to watch them facing each other, sitting on the benches of the opposite parties. The heated discussions, which used to follow, provided a good bit of amusement to the disinterested observers.

Suddenly the events took an unexpected turn. She became a die-hard Conservative. After that she was always found arm-in-arm

with the Irish boy and their engagement was announced after a few days only. This brought her political career to an end, her former followers were afraid even of talking to her.

It was at this juncture that I particularly wanted to know her. I had to follow an indirect method. For a long time her fiancé was known to me, and I had invited him dozens of times to play bridge at my place. It was through him that we got to know each other. I invited her to tea. First she refused, but in the end she accepted my invitation. When she had known something about me, she became a frequent visitor.

One evening while we were having our tea I asked her, "What has brought about this change in you?"

"It was the bunch around me and especially my countrymen."

"Why? What have they done?"

"Oh, plenty, their monstrous behaviour was more than sufficient to drive any one mad. They have exhausted all my patience. I tried to reform them, but I tried in vain. Now the only thing I can do is to run them down, point out their defects and ask for their oppression. This might open their eyes and lead to some reform. That is the reason I am following this course."

"But I would like to know some concrete facts."

"Oh would you? I suppose you would. Then sit tight and listen."

"I am all attention."

"Then listen. When I came to this country, I thought that socialism was the only salvation for the freedom of my country. Taking the present circumstances and perverted mentality into consideration, I found that I was following a wrong track. The only fellows who gathered round me were the riff-raff.

"Specially the ones from my country, it did not matter to which party they belonged, after inviting me once or twice to their place, the only thing they wanted was the satisfaction of their cheap carnal desire. Still I mixed with them, only with the hope of reforming them; but some of them were so low that they went to the extent of applying force. I was afraid of my own safety. After considering all the pros and cons carefully, I decided that it was best to cut myself off completely, and do some good from a distance if I could.

"Practically all of them when they go back say that Western women are corrupt and demoralised. That they have committed adultery and fornication starting from the aristocracy.

and ending with the working classes, but the women of their type could be found in any society in any part of the world. They are proud of their deeds and boast among their friends. They judge everything according to their own standard and their perverted mentality. How much do they understand about the Western Philosophy of life? Is it the mental state or is it the fleshly side of human relationship?

"Some of them try to find out in this country the pure love under Eastern atmosphere. It does not matter what they do, but they want their beloved to be chaste and pure according to their ideals. If they see their beloveds sitting arm-in-arm with their closest friends or kissing their relatives, their love dreams are shattered and their hearts are broken for ever. They then go back and write books, posing as saints and deprecating the women of this country in order to achieve their cheap ends.

"Oh! What an abomination!! Fools of the first water!!! Have they ever tried to study the circumstances? The girls might be the employees of the political department employed to find out the character of these fellows. They might be after their money, and try to extract out of them as much as possible by playing upon their sentiments. They might be

flirts, just wanting good time and not caring for the fellow with whom they are going. They might be good friends. The idea of friendship between boys and girls is non-existent in the East. If a girl comes to their house, they imagine that she is in love with them and they too are in love with her. If anything untoward happens, their hearts are broken for ever and every thing goes to pieces. What a fanciful idea of love !!

"Nothing is broken. Heartless brutes !! Did they ever have a heart ? If they have a heart it must have been made of unbreakable steel. Babblers, idlers, they just argue out things for argument's sake. They talk of freedom, but they have not the slightest conception of it. The only thing they teach, whether in religion or society or community is bondage. They are not prepared to give any freedom to their sons and daughters. Those who are subservient and slavish are pointed out as models. Women having their feet covered with big silver ornaments and that heavy jingling sound produced by them reminded me of the famous Chain Gang of America. The association of ideas of those men in chains and those women in perpetual chains always runs parallel in my mind.

"Even those who have discarded the veil

and have removed the chains are in no way better off, due to social and religious conditions. It is no use to give them the glorified name of Devis, Satis and so on. They are just like birds in the cages. Under the holy name of religion and duty they are taught bondage and slavery from their very birth, and that idea is constantly strengthened. Therefore there are no chances of revolt. If there are sporadic rises here and there, they are nipped in the bud, by socially murdering the individuals concerned. Men can commit all sorts of crime and still they are pure; but the bodily purity of women must be maintained under the sacred name of chastity. These are the examples of deductions which lead to absurdity. By directing the energies into wrong channels the mental deterioration is reaching the limit.

"The whole system of education leads to nothing but slavery. Men get educated with the idea of finding out government jobs and women for finding suitable husbands, and not with the idea of social advancement and uplift. They have not the guts and the energy to fight and eradicate traditionalism and follow rationalism.

"Give them freedom. Treat them as equals in every way. Cut all these superstitious, traditional, social and stupid religious bonds and

make the society a fit place for human beings to live in. The good of humanity is the real religion. Freedom within and freedom without is the essence of social advancement. The actions of the body will have some influences on the mind; but it must be remembered that it is the mind and not the body.

"I am saying all these things because I want to point out your defects. Open your eyes as to what the world as a whole thinks of you. You are within the world and not outside it. It's the world opinion only which matters. It's no use imagining yourself to be the top, and judging the world from your viewpoint only. Your case is just like that of a family in which there were fifty brothers. Nearly forty of them said with one voice that one of their brothers was bad in some way or the other. But he shouted that all of them were madcaps and he alone was a holy saint. The result was that he was down-trodden, ill-treated and no one took any notice of him. Until this juncture the analogy befits you nicely. Then suddenly there was change in him. He was improved and reformed to such an extent that all of them respected him. Due to the power and influence which he wielded a good many sought his protection. If you have some stuff in you, you could do the same and complete the analogy.

"You educated fellows could do it. Introduce the compulsory system of education between the ages of five and fifteen for boys and girls alike. Not the slavish, superstitious and degraded type of education which is imparted just now, but one of freedom, self-reliance and for building of character. You might point out that very little is left from our National Income after deducting all other expenses, but that is absurd. Starve yourself, strive hard, cut all other expenses to their minimum and see the wonderful results of your own efforts. It's the rising generation which is the essence and spirit of our Nation and not the incurable old one. The same you could do systematically for social and religious reformation.

"There will be upheaval and opposition from all sides. You will have to meet everything like real human beings fighting for the good of humanity. You will have to do it with a firm hand. You may have socially to sacrifice some of your own for the sake of a greater good. The fact is that everything good and real has always met with opposition, but by sheer force of will and energy any good cause has always been carried through by those who have understood the real truth behind it. Men may come and men may go, but the path of duty will continue for ever.

"But most of you, when you go back, knowing your incapacabilities, try to justify your unworthy selves as worthies by climbing the top through the cheap and easiest means—the communal weaknesses, social oppressions and religious fracas. Once there you want to maintain that rotten state, because it serves as a means to your selfish ends. By constantly following that wrong path, a psychology is created in you, which makes you believe that there is really some good in what you are doing. The only thing you are doing is deceiving those who are around you and cheating your own conscience. You, the enlightened ones, become the mightiest obstruction in the path of progress.

"India is in a melting-pot. Perhaps the contents of that pot have melted. But the pot is a dirty one which has polluted all of its contents. The application of heat might make some pure molecules jump here and there, but all those efforts are useless. The water needs placing in a retort and the pot needs a thorough cleansing. After that by the mere process of distillation, the pure contents should be transferred into that clean pot."

CHAPTER XXIX

On my way home I spent most of my time in thinking. It was the time when Italo-Abyssinian War was at its zenith. There were signs of Sino-Japanese conflict, the trouble among the South American Republics, the Spanish troubles and the unsettled conditions throughout the whole of Europe. The concrete and horrid reality, the Italo Abyssinian war, on which not only the attention of the whole world was focussed, but the energies of a good many countries were employed to see the end according to their advantage, was the most important of them all.

At that time I wanted to know the real cause, which is the origin of these wars. The only explanation which my mind could give was the brute force in man with its best companion, the male obstinacy. From the early history of human civilisation this has been the persistent force. First individuals fought and

destroyed each other for the sake of personal advantages. Those who were around them watched and encouraged this because they wanted to maintain the sanctity of this cause. Later when it was realised that it was evil, it gave place one after another to organised fights between families, tribes, groups of villages, principalities, kingdoms, and now its mightiest form the nations.

Every one knows that it is evil, but still consciously or unconsciously youngmen become the regular worshippers of this brute force. Now it has taken a fantastic and hellish shape, and practically the whole of the world divides itself into two hostile camps and all sorts of inhuman atrocities are committed for the sake of supposed personal advantages. The only advantage which humanity gets is the destruction of its best element for which it feels sorry for the time being. Again this fever goes on increasing which brings about their destruction. This canker and incurable disease seems to be an evil part and parcel of human nature.

In the Atlantic Ocean some warships and destroyers could be seen here and there. The real idea of the magnitude of the trouble was formed at Gibraltar. Practically the whole of the Atlantic fleet of the British Navy was stationed there. The exodus of the British

Army and Navy officials to the Mediterranean was remarkable. Even half of my ship was filled by these people who had left their wives and children behind.

The rock fort of Gibraltar was so well fortified that it appeared immune even from aerial and gas attacks. In the city the customers were not the tourists, but the military officers. The sheltered arrangement of the whole Fleet was in such a way that all of them could rush to Port Said at a moment's notice. Similarly there was the concentration of a large portion of the Mediterranean Fleet at Malta. The whole city was astir being nearer to the danger zone.

I saw the same things at Marseilles, but in this case the ships were French and not British. The busiest Commercial port of the Mediterranean appeared quite dull and uninteresting. Only the places in the outskirts like the Notre Dame de la Garde were quiet, charming and peaceful. Otherwise in the port with the exception of a few merchant vessels, there was only the movement of troops and other war materials.

Due to the Economic Blockade our ship was the last one to touch Naples. The only ships which could be seen were Italian, but the

Trans-Atlantic liners did present a majestic scene. The war had made things look disorderly but still everything was in order. Before getting out of the steamer all of us were scrutinised and only a few of us were allowed to go into the city.

There is a saying, 'See Naples and die'; but I do not want to die. I have seen things which are much more beautiful and might see things which may still be more beautiful. No doubt the City is very charming. Mount Vesuvius just near by emitted smoke and sometimes fire from its volcano. Due to atmospheric conditions the smoke making all the shining, burning colours of the rainbow was an unforgettable sight. On the other side of the hill there was the excavated City of Pompeii, a place of infinite interest to the historian.

The city itself with its beautiful buildings, palaces, museums, the upper and the aristocratic quarter full of those famous Italian villas and a big castle which was converted into a prison where we went by means of a lift, has its charms. But all those charms were marred for the time being.

Thrice a day bulletins were issued showing the state of the war and the number of soldiers killed and wounded. It was a pitiable sight to see. With the exception of a few boy-soldiers

and some old men, only women and children could be seen in the streets. The places which were most crowded were the squares and the churches. In the churches dishevelled women with tears in their eyes were praying fervently.

I could not endure that unbearable sight any longer and I returned to the steamer at once. When we left Naples I began to wonder at the majesty and glory of nature on the one hand and the human suffering on the other. From a distance there was that beautiful city of Naples containing unimaginable human suffering. By the side of it was the gloomy Vesuvius showing all the possible sympathy. In contrast to that was the glorious Italian sunest which nothing on the face of this earth could match. It was a beauty beyond words only to be enjoyed. It was something inviting, fascinating and bewitching. The white sailing boats coming from the lovers' Isle of Capri and gliding slowly on that still sheet of water with big but indistinct lights in them, seemed to say, "We are coming to be one with you."

I could not sleep that night for quite a long time. The moon playing on the waves and the beautiful Italian coast held me spell-bound. In the early hours of the morning when we passed through the Straits of Messina, thousands of twinkling lights of Messina on one side and

of Reggio on the other and that big light house made me gaze and gaze. I do not know for how long I looked at those lights; because I fell asleep.

Before leaving London we were informed that if the Suez Canal was closed, we might have to go via the Madeira and the Canary Islands and the Cape of Good Hope. I liked the idea but I knew that there were very few chances of its coming to reality. From time to time we were given the same type of notices and upto the time we had actually crossed the Suez there was every liklihood of our going via the Cape.

Again in Port Said there was the same sight to see. There the destroyers, submarines, bombers, and war-ships were standing ready for action. Passengers like the Poles, Russians, and the Turks were not allowed to leave it. Everything was very well guarded. On board the steamer I had formed friendship with an Egyptian boy. In port Said he showed me something altogether different this time. He took me to places like the High School, the Hospital and to some of the houses of good Egyptian families.

It was his idea that I should go with him to Cairo by car, stop at one or two villages and

then catch the steamer at Suez. Our movement from village to village was controlled by the officers on guard; and a strict vigilance was kept on our movements. All this was necessary, because no one knew what might happen any moment even in Egypt.

In Cairo every third man was a police-man. It was not that there was any regular dress for them. They were in their long white Egyptian shirts and the only sign by which they could be distinguished was, the word 'Police' was written on their shirt sleeves. The guards at the museums, the guides, the drivers, and men in any kind of public service were members of the police force. But inspite of all this, I was able to see Cairo thoroughly with the help of my friend.

At the Pyramids the guide explained to me, how thousands of slaves were employed for a good many years to construct those huge monuments. They were given very little to eat and were forced to work by means of the whip. If they died of hunger, fatigue and cruelty, they were replaced by a fresh stock

Then I was able to understand the real meaning of that Wonder of the world. The great wonder of the world was the greatest example of human folly, misery and suffering.

The ship was to reach Suez at about eleven O'clock in the night; therefore, I was there at about nine. There were other passengers too, and we waited anxiously for its arrival but there were no signs of it. We went to our Agents Office and inquired as to what the matter was. We were told that it was delayed due to some special reasons and we should not expect it till the early hours of the morning.

I went into a dance-hall to have some fun and refreshment. When I returned I was told that it would arrive at about nine in the morning. The rest of the time I sat watching the steamers going up and down the Canal. All of them without exception were Italian. Those on the homeward voyage contained dying and wounded soldiers; but still they tried to make everything look as lively as possible.

In the Arabian Sea I read that Italy had practically conquered Abyssinia. The prices of iron, steel and all other war materials were going up by leaps and bounds; and all the great powers of the world were preparing for war.

The war fever is increasing and the whole world is busy. Every nation is preparing to its farthest limit. When they are unable to gather any more strength, the speedy and hellish annihilation would begin at once. The world

signs are ominous, let us see the effects of the coming war on the present civilisation.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Ganesh, you are getting excited. You look tired and you have grown very pale. With the exception of tea, when you had a rest for fifteen minutes, you have been speaking in the same strain continuously during the last eight hours. It's quite late. It's about nine O'clock."

"I did not know that it was as late as that. I think I will go home."

"Yes, my son, you need some rest. You have given me plenty of food for thought."

"I do need some rest. Thank you very much for having taken a great load off my mind, good-night."

"Good-night, son."

On his way home Ganesh unconsciously put his hand into his pocket and found a thin and heavy envelope. When he opened

ound that it contained some currency notes.
He smiled and trod on in his leisurely fashion.

